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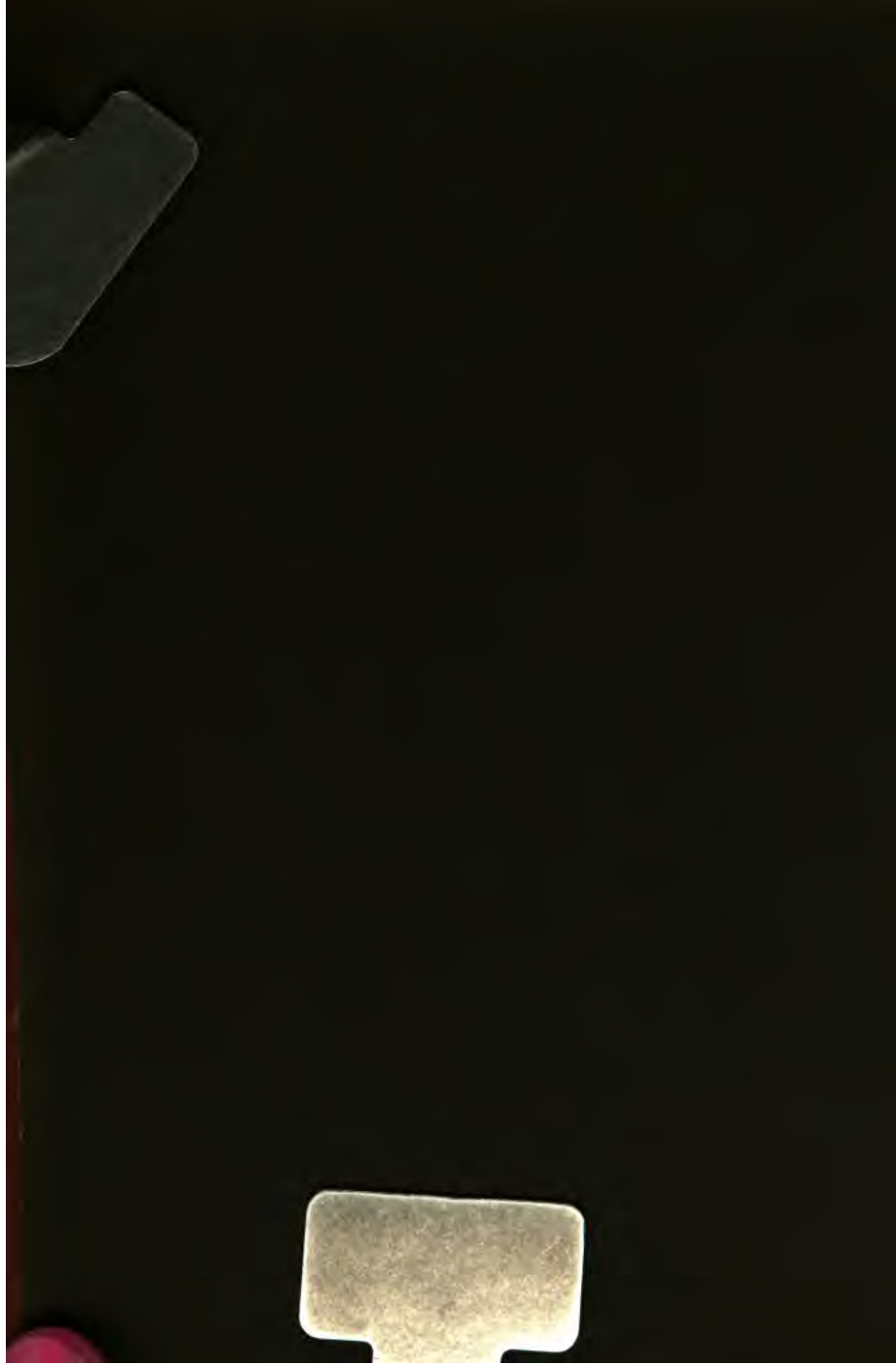
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IN THE GOLDEN DAYS

BY

EDNA LYALL

AUTHOR OF "WE TWO," "DONOVAN," ETC.

'It is not but the tempest that doth show
The seaman's cunning; but the field that tries
The captain's courage; and we come to know
Best what men are in their worst jeopardies;
For lo, how many have we seen to grow
To high renown from lowest miseries,
Out of the hands of death, and many a one
T' have been undone, had they not been undone.'

S. DANIEL. 1619.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

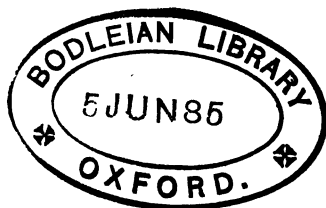
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WITH MY LOVE
TO THE KINSFOLK
AT
'MONDISFIELD.'

P R E F A C E.

IN this book I have tried to describe the gradual growth of a character, and, chiefly as a relief from perpetual nineteenth-centuryism, have chosen as a background the England of two hundred years ago. I wish to disclaim at once, however, the title of 'historical novel'—a terror both to author and reader.

A few real characters play a secondary part in the story: Algernon Sydney, Francis Bampffield, John Griffith, the Delaunes, the little Duchess of Grafton, John Evelyn, Ferguson, Professor Ruysch, Betterton the actor, etc. The actual fate of Griffith I have been unable to discover, and cannot vouch for the fact of his release, though as he survived Bampffield many years, and lived after the Revolution, he probably regained his freedom sooner or later.

The life and character of Algernon Sydney I have studied in the works of Blencowe, Collins, Meadley, and Ewald. The conversation on Tower Hill was reported by eye-witnesses, and the letter to Hugo, with the exception of the opening and closing remarks, is in Sydney's own words.

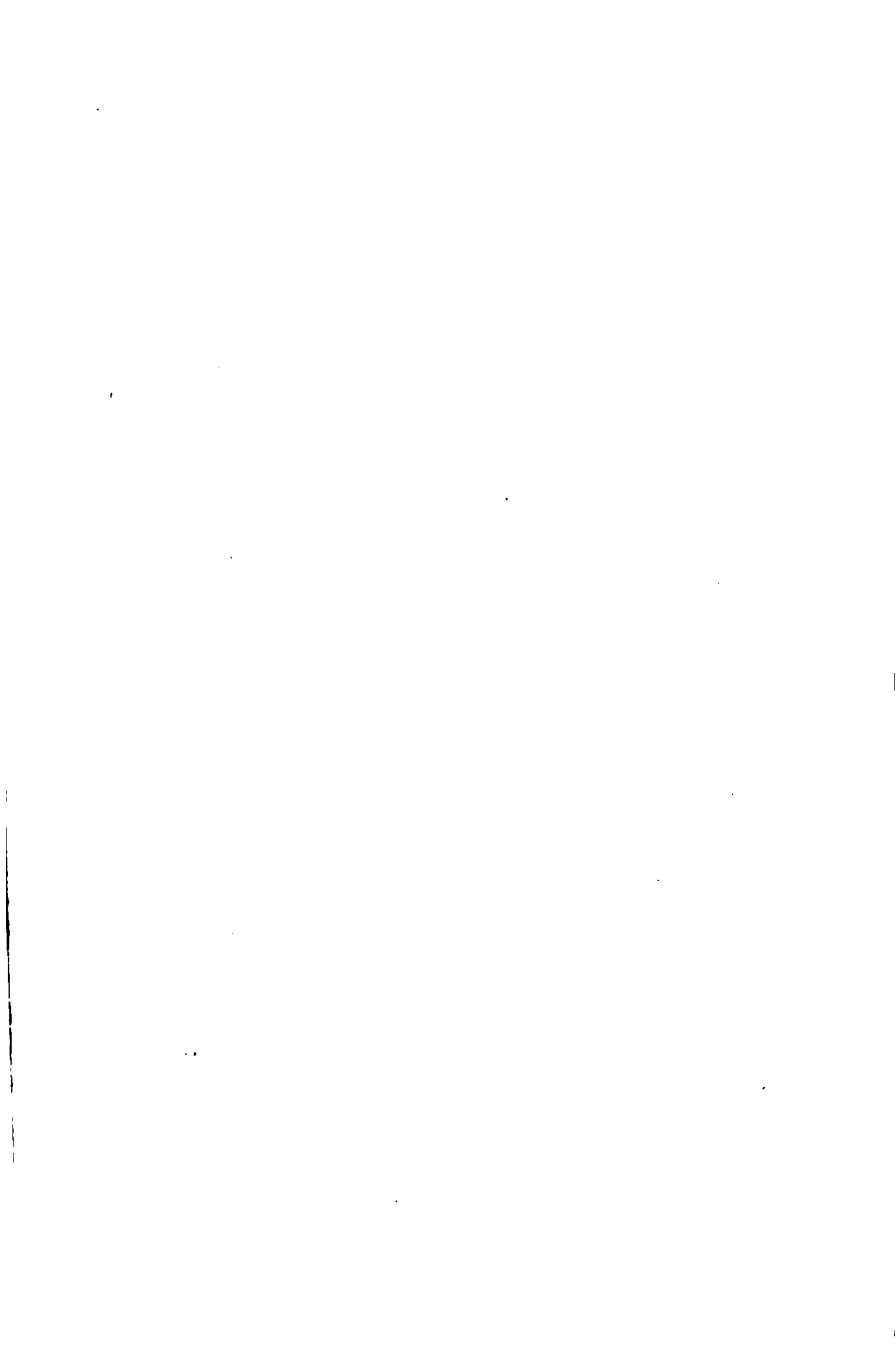
EDNA LYALL.

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IN THE GOLDEN DAYS.

CHAPTER I.

‘GOOD KING CHARLES’S GOLDEN DAYS.’

What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted !
Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just,
And he but naked, though locked up in steel,
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.

SHAKSPERE.

‘THAT stripling of yours is too quiet by half, Randolph ! You should shake him up a bit—give him a little of your superfluous energy.’

‘Hugo is but nineteen ; you can hardly expect him to be aught but a raw school-boy.’

Sir Peregrine Blake laughed.

‘Schoolboy indeed! as little of a boy as ever I saw. You’ve kept him too close, Randolph, and that’s a fact! Mewed him up as though he were a convent maid.’

‘He had’ good schooling at Westminster,’ returned the other, ‘and if Dr. Busby couldn’t birch him into an ordinary fellow how can I help it? I’m sure he has had enough thrashings from me alone to harden him.’

‘I’ll warrant that!’ said Sir Peregrine, smiling broadly. ‘You were ever a good hand at keeping other folk in order. For my part, I marvel that your brother is so willing to bow down to you in everything.’

‘Habit, Blake—a mere matter of habit. I’ve brought him up to it, and now begin to reap the reward of my pains. He will be a useful second to me.’

‘Why don’t you get him a commission? The army is the best cure for your bookish, philosophising youth.’

‘He’s not fit for active service. Besides, I would rather have him in my own profession.’

“Others believe no voice to an organ
So sweet as lawyer’s in his bar-gown.”

trolled Sir Penegrine, quoting from *Hudibras*, the great satire of the times. ‘Well, after all, the Bar is the usual thing for younger sons. Have you fairly settled the matter?’

‘Quite. He was entered as a student at the Inner Temple six months ago, and already he has taken up with the most jovial and rollicking of the Templars, who will soon stir him up.’

‘What, that fellow Denham, who’s riding with him now?’

‘Ay, the one who was so lucky yesterday at Newmarket. I never knew such a fellow, he was born to win.’

‘By my faith! an odd pair of friends!’ said Sir Peregrine, laughing. ‘Rupert Denham—dare devil, and Hugo Wharncliffe—passive obedience in the flesh!’

The elder brother frowned a little.

‘Passive obedience has its advantages,’ he remarked, with some asperity.

And for a few minutes there was a pause in the conversation.

The two were riding along a rough track which in those days—two hundred years ago—was dignified by the name of a road. All around them lay a vast expanse of slightly undulating ground covered with low gorse bushes and heather. Of cultivation no trace was to be seen; wild, open, and utterly waste lay the great stretch of land as far as the eye could reach, without one field reclaimed, or one acre turned to the profit of a nation which yet was often in sore need of bread. That the state of the country was not all that it might have been, did not, however, occur to the two gentlemen as they rode on in silence, on that October afternoon of the year 1682. Randolph Wharnccliffe had indeed a grievance, but it was a private grievance, and as to troubling himself

about the people and the land, or the laws of supply and demand, or the abject condition of the poor, or the responsibility of riches, it would never have entered his head.

He was now a little over forty, a clever, cold-looking man, evidently one who, having set his mind on any object, would pursue it through thick and thin. His features were regular and good, but there was an ominous want of repose in the forehead, while the mouth, plainly visible under the slender moustache, betrayed a bitter and overbearing temper. He wore the usual long, curled wig of the period, a crimson riding-suit, a short cloak thrown back over one shoulder, and a crimson felt hat cocked on the left side.

His companion, Sir Peregrine Blake, was a few years older in reality, but years had left few traces on his face either for good or evil. He was a bluff, ruddy, hot-tempered country squire, proud of his long pedigree, his ancestral mansion, and his

well-stocked deer-park. He was a Suffolk magistrate and flattered himself that he discharged his duties with great dignity and decorum. Both gentlemen were returning from the autumn races at Newmarket, and Randolph Wharncliffe and his brother were to spend the night under Sir Peregrine's roof on their way back to London.

The rough track had now led down to a broader and more regular thoroughfare, deeply scored, however, with ruts. On each side of the way was a wood, dusky enough to make Randolph draw up his steed sharply, and glance back across the heathy country they had left.

'Those two are loitering,' he said. 'Maybe we had better wait for them. This wood might prove a snug retreat for highwaymen.'

'I don't think it,' said Sir Peregrine. 'Tis not far from the village of Mondisfield, and but half a mile from the Hall.'

'Mondisfield!' exclaimed Randolph, in a

tone which made his companion look up quickly.

'Ay, Colonel Wharncliffe's place. Why, bless my soul, I never thought of that before! I suppose he's near of kin to you?'

'Thank heaven, no,' said Randolph, bitterly. 'We are very distantly related. But I come into the estate at his death.'

Sir Peregrine uttered half-a-dozen unwritable ejaculations.

'Who'd have thought it!' he exclaimed, 'I never dreamed of connecting you with that grave, puritanical republican. We'll drink to-night to his speedy dissolution! 'Twould be something like to have you master of Mondisfield Hall.'

'Had the king rewarded his friends instead of pardoning his foes, I should have been in possession these twenty years,' said Randolph, his brow darkening, his lips contracting themselves into a straight line, his eyes gleaming with cold anger.

'Ho, ho!' exclaimed Sir Peregrine. 'Now I see how the land lies! You are

one of the many unrequited cavaliers, whose fathers melted the family plate for the Blessed Martyr's use, and lost their broad acres for the privilege of fighting his battles.'

'I care not for what we have lost,' returned the other. 'But I do care that this minion of Cromwell's, this hater of monarchy, should be calmly enjoying all his possessions, while loyal subjects are yet crippled by poverty.'

'You should get the fellow denounced to the king. Catch him using treasonable words, or haunting conventicles. Why, confound it, Randolph! What's the good of your being a lawyer if you can't make out a pretty little case in your own behoof?'

Randolph did not reply. He looked round impatiently towards the other horsemen who were approaching them as rapidly as the bad roads would permit.

The elder of the two was a merry, careless-looking fellow of three-and-twenty, his whole face seemed to sparkle with

humour, and his fantastic dress, covered at every available point with loops and streamers of bright-coloured ribbons, suited his face to a nicety.

The younger, Hugo, was indeed a strange contrast. In those days, such a face could not but challenge observation, it was so curiously unlike the generality of faces. In complexion, he was pale and somewhat fair. Like the rest of the world, he was clean shaven, save for a very slight moustache; and, unlike the rest of the world, he had not as yet adopted the prevalent wig, though it was, as a rule, eagerly coveted even by young boys. He wore his own hair, which was light brown, and somewhat wanting in colour, but made up for its deficiencies in that way by its crisp curliness and its great thickness and length. The rather large and marked features were well-cut, the chin pointed, the mouth singularly sweet-tempered. But the power of the face lay in the forehead, which was strikingly broad and open, and

in the large, strangely-shaped, dark grey eyes. Altogether, it was a face to haunt one—full of interest, because full of possibilities. Apparently there was, however, some truth in Sir Peregrine's strictures. Hugo did, in fact, look as though he needed waking up. He lived in a world of his own, blissfully removed from the coarse and sensual world which surrounded him, but a world too shadowy, too dreamily peaceful to call forth his best faculties.

‘What the devil do you mean by keeping me waiting like this?’ said Randolph, as his brother rejoined him. ‘Ah, I see how it has been!’ he continued, catching sight of a harmless-looking bundle of herbs fastened to his saddle-bow. ‘You’ve been loitering over those wretched specimens of yours. I’ll put a stop to it altogether, if you make it such a general nuisance.’

And, with an angry gesture, he reached across, tore off the bunch of herbs, and

flung them far away into the copse which bordered the road.

Hugo looked after them with a sort of regret, but not even a gleam of anger dawned in his quiet eyes. He made no excuse for his slowness, neither did he express any concern for having caused his brother to wait for him. He was absolutely, yet not sulkily, silent. It was rather as if some noisy, screaming bird had flown across the surface of a calm lake, thinking to create a vast disturbance, but quite powerless to trouble the deep, still waters.

The small cavalcade rode on.

'Well!' ejaculated Denham, turning a look of utter astonishment upon his companion, 'I'm blessed, if I'd let a fellow do that to me! Why, he's thrown away that weed you were so mighty pleased at finding.'

'Ay,' said Hugo, 'I would I had not put it with the rest. Something must

have angered Randolph. Maybe he has had words with Sir Peregrine.'

'If you aren't the meekest fellow living, my name's not Rupert!' exclaimed Denham. 'What right had he to fling away what belonged to you?'

'Right!' ejaculated Hugo. 'Why, it was Randolph! He's my guardian, you know, my brother—everything to me!'

His face became more animated as he spoke, evidently loyalty to his very despotic elder was his most pronounced characteristic. It had never occurred to him not to obey, not to reverence.

Just at this moment Sir Peregrine's horse stumbled, a proceeding which caused that worthy to swear lustily.

'A stone in his shoe, if I'm not mistaken,' said Randolph; then, raising his voice, 'Dismount, Hugo, instantly, and see what is amiss with the beast.'

Hugo flung the reins of his own steed to Denham, and in a moment was making

the best of his way through the mud and loose stones to the Squire's horse. Sir Peregrine had also dismounted, but he left his horse to Hugo, perhaps not caring to spoil his long riding-gloves, perhaps because he had caught sight of an attraction which he could never resist.

By the roadside, gathering the blackberries which grew on the outskirts of the wood, was a lovely girl; beside her stood a little child of ten years old holding the large basket already more than half filled with the shining ripe fruit.

Exactly what passed Hugo never knew, he was very unobservant at all times, and now, absorbed in his own thoughts, and busy with the horse, he heard nothing but a hum of meaningless conversation, until a frightened, indignant cry in a girlish voice fell upon his ear and startled him back to the world of realities.

The scene that met his gaze was of too common occurrence to have aroused him under ordinary circumstances. That a

pretty girl should be waylaid by a fine gentleman, kissed, complimented, treated with every sort of insulting familiarity, seemed to him, or had seemed until now, inevitable. But then few of the women he knew made any sort of objection to such treatment. This girl objected very strongly.

All his life long Hugo could call up that picture. The background of autumn trees in russet and gold, the broad strip of grass by the roadside, dotted here and there with bramble bushes, the little child with a face of astonishment and horror, and in vivid contrast the red-visaged Squire and the victim of his rude attentions, her blue eyes wide with fright and bright with indignation, her cheeks pale, the short rings of sunny brown hair lightly stirred by the wind and unprotected by the brown hood which had fallen back from her head.

Sir Peregrine, nettled by her resistance, grew more rude and importunate.

'No, no, no!' cried the girl. 'Evelyn! call for help!'

But even as she said the words, she knew that they were useless. Everyone was at work gathering apples in the orchard, and the orchard was half-a-mile away.

It was at that moment that Hugo woke up. Had Sir Peregrine guessed what would be the first results of that waking, he would have prudently left his wish unuttered. For all at once, in a way which absolutely took away his breath, he was aware of an apparition in Lincoln green which thrust itself between him and the object of his admiration, a pair of strong arms encircled him, an adroit push and jerk came at that one vulnerable point the back of his knee, and in a trice he was sprawling on his back among the long grass.

'There! run off while you can!' said Hugo, rather breathlessly, turning to the rescued maiden. He was evidently well

taught in all gymnastic feats, but out of training.

‘Oh,’ she faltered, ‘how shall I thank you enough!’

‘By getting into safety now,’ he said, smiling, and motioning her back from the road.

It was the first time he had ever spoken so decidedly, or assumed such an air of command; he felt altogether a different creature, stronger, freer; but less peaceful—for once in his life, indeed, positively anxious.

Both Randolph and Denham had now dismounted. Denham was trying to conceal his silent convulsions of laughter, while Randolph, with an air of great concern and a crease in his brow which boded ill for Hugo’s future, bent over Sir Peregrine, who was struggling again to his feet.

‘The impudent, meddling puppy!’ he exclaimed, pouring forth a whole volley of oaths. ‘You shall pay dearly for

this, sir! I'll call you out for this, sir!

Randolph looked not a little discomposed at this announcement. It was quite in accordance with the customs of the times, but somehow he had never contemplated the possibility of a duel for his brother.

3 H 'You would never fight a mere school-boy like that, Blake! I promise you he shall have a sound thrashing to-night for his impudence. Come here, Hugo; apologise to Sir Peregrine at once.'

Hugo moved a few steps forward, but did not utter a word. Denham watched his face curiously. All its dreamy content was gone, all its unquestioning calm dispelled; there had come to him one of those terrible moments which occur in most lives when suddenly, without the slightest warning, we are called upon to choose between two courses, both painful to us, both apparently evil. Was he now at last to disobey his guardian, or was he to own himself in the wrong when he knew that

he had been right? Either decision would, as he was even now dimly aware, involve him in great danger. If he obeyed his brother's command, his moral being would be for ever degraded. If he disobeyed, his physical being would be in mortal peril; for he was quite well aware that, although by mere agility he might manage to throw Sir Peregrine, he had no chance in an actual duel. But to disobey Randolph, and to do so with nothing but death staring him in the face! The habit of a lifetime was not to be easily broken; the habitually submissive will could not assert itself without a violent and most painful effort. There was a dead pause, not a sound was to be heard save the autumn wind sighing among the trees, and the munching of the horses as they grazed by the roadside.

‘What do you mean by hesitating like this?’ said Randolph, laying a heavy hand upon his shoulder. ‘Do as I tell you, apologise at once.’

'I can't apologise,' said Hugo at last, in a quick, agitated voice. 'I am sorry to have had to throw Sir Peregrine, but it was a disagreeable necessity.'

'You meddling, conceited jackanapes, what do you mean by a necessity?' thundered Sir Peregrine, purple with rage.

'Leave him to me, Blake,' interposed Randolph; 'I'll bring him to his senses. Now, look here, Hugo, you know well enough that I never go back from what I've said. I command you to apologise. I am your guardian, and I insist that you shall do your duty and obey me.'

Another pause. Hugo had grown deathly white. At last he spoke with a great effort.

'I obey you in all things, sir; but you must stand second to my conscience.'

'Conscience!'

There was a shout of laughter.

'He'll turn conventicler next,' shouted Sir Peregrine. 'You idiot, don't you know that you're uttering pestilent heresy—sub-

stituting your beggarly private judgment for authority?’

‘*Will* you obey me?’ said Randolph, once more, pressing yet more heavily upon his shoulder, and speaking in a tone which, owing to certain old memories, made the blood curdle in Hugo’s veins.

He looked right up into the fierce, grey eyes, however, and answered, firmly,

‘No, sir, I will not.’

There was a touch of dignity in his manner which startled Denham. Perhaps it was owing to the entire absence of defiance, the mingled regret and respect of his tone.

‘Then go to your destruction!’ said Randolph, furiously. ‘Blake, I am happy to act as your second. I hope you’ll give this impudent rebel a good lesson.’

‘No delay, then,’ roared Sir Peregrine. ‘We’ll have it out, now that my blood’s up. Come, look sharp, Wharncliffe!’

‘My man has the choice of weapons,’ said Denham, stepping forward, and volun-

tarily taking the part of second to his friend.

Sir Peregrine laughed.

'Let him take it, then, and be quick! Tell him that both my sword and my pistol have seen good service, and have settled better men ere now.'

Denham rejoined Hugo, who had retired to a little distance, and delivered the message.

'And you'd best choose swords, old fellow, for Blake is such a confounded good shot, that you'd not stand a chance that way,' he added.

'All right,' said Hugo, mechanically drawing his weapon from its scabbard, and examining its edge.

At that time, a sword was part of the ordinary dress of every gentleman, but Hugo's had at present been ornamental rather than useful. He had grasped the hilt each Sunday when the women curtsied in the Creed, but the action had been purely mechanical. It had never

occurred to him that he might one day be called on to defend his faith.

Denham crossed over once more with the decision, then returned. His merry face looked a trifle graver than usual, and his jokes came with a slight effort.

‘By heaven! I wish I could go in instead of you,’ he said. ‘That hot-tempered squire is as strong as an ox, and a practised hand, while you——!’

He broke off, and glanced at his companion, who had thrown aside his riding-cloak and doublet, and now stood, straight and slim, in a close-fitting vest of dark green cloth, loose breeches, and crimson stockings, his ample white shirt-sleeves tied at the wrist with bunches of crimson ribbon. He seemed ridiculously young, and most obviously unequal to his challenger, more fit to be quietly poring over books in some library than preparing for a duel.

‘Look here, old fellow,’ said Denham, forcing a little merriment into his voice,

which he was far from feeling, 'you must pluck up heart of grace! If you go in as spiritless as you are now, you'll be a dead man in five minutes—and then you'll be bodiless, which will be worse. Come, cheer up. Think you are going to kill him.'

Hugo shuddered at the idea.

'Good Lord! what a thing it is to have an imagination! Now, I can go in for a duel and enjoy it. Why can't you expect the best for once?'

'I'm not sure which is the best,' said Hugo, reflectively. 'However'—smiling a little—'it's waste of time to think of it. Of course he's more than a match for me. Seems odd to have been born and bred for this—to throw away one's life in a dispute. A waste of good material! Though Mr. Newton says there's no waste in Nature.'

'Was there ever such a fellow!' exclaimed Denham, almost ready to shake him, and yet feeling all the time a curious sense

of awe. 'He's already begun to picture himself as worms'-meat! Thank Heaven, I'm a practical man, and not a visionary! Can't you get up even a spice of anger to warm you?'

Hugo shook his head.

'Sir Peregrine has anger enough for the two of us,' he said, with a touch of humour in his tone. 'I did feel angry when the girl cried, but that's all over now. There! time's up. We must come. Thanks, Denham, for your help.'

They walked a few paces in silence, Hugo's eyes involuntarily turned not to his antagonist but to his brother. He looked at him for a moment keenly, then turned to Denham with a sigh.

'If only Randolph had not deserted me!' he said, wistfully, 'I should care very little for the rest.'

The seconds spoke a few words to each other, and led the way to the smoothest bit of turf at hand. Hugo followed in a dull, mechanical way. Whether it were

cowardly or not, he could not candidly own that he felt anything but heavy-hearted.

To be compelled to lay down his life by the barbarous custom of the time, was not to him a very inspiring thing.

Never before had the world seemed so beautiful to him, never had the mere joy of existence thrilled through him as it did now. He took one long, searching glance all around. Good-bye to the blue skies with their fleecy white cloudlets, good-bye to the autumn woods, good-bye to beautiful nature, of whom he knew so little and wanted to know so much! A familiar whinnying sound reminded him of his favourite horse; he turned quickly, and, seeing that Sir Peregrine was not quite ready, he walked to the woodside where the animal was fastened up to a silver-birch tree. Just once more he would speak to his beloved chestnut.

All at once as he caressed the steed he became aware that at no great distance,

crouched down among the thick bramble-bushes within the wood, there yet lurked the pretty girl and her little sister, the innocent cause of all his trouble.

‘Joyce! Joyce!’ he heard the little one exclaim, in a loud whisper. ‘Look there!’

And then for a minute the sunny brown head was lifted, and he caught a vision of a lovely, tear-stained face, of innocent blue eyes which met his fully, eyes which were as the windows from out of which a pure soul looked forth.

‘Mr Dryden would call them watchet blue!’ he reflected; and then all at once there rushed tumultuously into his mind the thought that those same blue eyes would watch the duel, would perhaps sadden were he to fall in her cause, would even perchance weep for him.

What a curse, what a shadow to fall upon so young and pure a life, thus innocently to have caused the death of a

stranger ! What if he could, after all, vanquish Sir Peregrine ? Fight so well as to win the admiration of sweet, blue-eyed Joyce ?

Wonderful vision of a child-like face ! Wonderful manhood touched into life by the first appeal to its protective power !

He turned away and walked briskly across the turf to the appointed place ; his heart beat high with hope, a steady, quiet determination took possession of him. What if he *were* fighting against great odds ? Men had so fought before now and had conquered ! In any case he would do his best. For a moment his heart failed a little as he glanced at his brother. Well, he must try to dismiss that cold, stern, unsympathising face from his thoughts, he must think only of the sweet, anxious face that would be watching him from the wood.

Sir Peregrine was ready ; each combatant drew his sword, standing there face to

face each took the measure, as it were, of his antagonist. In truth they were a strange contrast. Sir Peregrine a man of great strength, short, thick-set, bull-necked, a splendid type of an English squire of the times, and a man who had fought at least a dozen duels. Hugo, tall, slight, delicate, with much more of the student than the duellist about him. In one respect only had he the advantage. Sir Peregrine was still in a towering passion, his red face was many degrees redder than usual, his eyes seemed all ablaze. Hugo, on the other hand, looked perfectly calm and self-possessed. It was a calm far removed from the dreamy indifference, the philosophic serenity which had hitherto characterised him, the calm of a strong resolve, full of power and dignity because concerned rather with the welfare of others than with its own fate.

Then in that quiet country-side, amid the soft sighing of the autumn wind, and

the faint rustle of the yellow leaves as they fell to their last resting-place, and the singing of the robins, and the quiet munching of the horses, there rose another sound, the sound of the clashing of swords. In the wood little Evelyn hid her face and trembled, but Joyce dried her tears and watched eagerly, anxiously. It was frightful and yet it fascinated her. Would her 'brave knight,' as she called him, conquer that horrible man who had tormented her? Alas, he was in comparison to him but as a reed to a sturdy oak, that he should conquer seemed barely possible. Joyce had, however, a firm belief in poetic justice; she watched hopefully.

Fast and hard fell those fearful blows; Hugo, who at present was acting purely on the defensive, parried them adroitly. So far all was well. The only question was how long his strength would hold out. He was well-taught, quick, agile, and acquainted with a few modern devices of

which the Squire was ignorant, but there was no denying that they were very ill-matched. Twice when for a minute they each retired a few paces, Joyce noticed that her champion, in spite of the warmth of the struggle, was growing ominously pale, and, when for the third time they paused for a moment's rest, she could hear even at that distance how he was gasping for breath, could see how he leant for support against his second, who encouraged him with words of warm praise.

But Joyce was so much taken up with watching her 'knight' that she did not notice very critically the condition of his opponent. Sir Peregrine had grown not pale but purple, he was beside himself with rage, could scarcely see clearly. Once more the two closed in deadly combat. The level rays of the afternoon sun glinted on the flashing blades, and lit up Hugo's white, set face; exhausted, almost fainting, he yet struggled on. But to

act on the defensive against such a foe as Sir Peregrine needed all his faculties at their very best. A violent thrust in an unexpected quarter very nearly proved his ruin, he managed partly to avert the blow, but was conscious even at the moment that with a wound in his sword arm he could not hold out much longer. Sir Peregrine with an uncontrollable shout of triumph struck wildly. Joyce sobbed aloud, but dashed the tears from her eyes that she might see what befell.

Ah, what was this? Blood was dropping slowly to the ground from her champion's right arm; but he had seized his sword in his left hand, parried Sir Peregrine's blow, taken the squire utterly by surprise, and, with the strength of despair, made one more desperate thrust. Sir Peregrine's sword wavered for an instant. Joyce could look no longer, actually to see which sword would enter which body was more than she could endure. A moment which seemed to her like eternity, then a fearful

oath ringing out into the still air, and a crash as of some one falling heavily on the turf. She looked up in an agony. Both the seconds were bending over a prostrate form; close by there stood—there stood—oh! why did this horrible mist come before her eyes and blind her!—yes, it was indeed her ‘brave knight.’ He stood gravely watching his vanquished foe for a minute, then, as if a thought had suddenly occurred to him, he made his way from the smooth bit of turf into the wood as though searching for something. Very unsteady were his steps. Joyce watched him anxiously. Ah, yes! it was as she had expected. He had sunk down exhausted among the thick brushwood.

‘Come, Evelyn, come!’ she exclaimed.
‘He is hurt, wounded!’

Shyly and yet unhesitatingly she made her way through the tangled undergrowth of the wood; shyly, but yet with gentle graciousness, she stooped over him.

‘Sir, I am afraid you are hurt,’ she said.
‘Can we help you in anything?’

Hugo looked up, and saw the sweet pure face looking down on him. It would have been like heaven just to realise that he was still alive and still near to those ‘watchet eyes,’ could he only have freed himself from the recollection of the man whom he had wounded—perhaps mortally.

‘I was looking for water,’ he said, faintly. ‘I thought I heard a brook hard by.’

‘Yes, our brook is near,’ she replied. ‘Run, Evelyn, quickly; fetch some water in your hat.’

The little child ran away as fast as her legs would carry her, snatching off her large straw hat as she went.

‘Your arm is hurt,’ said Joyce, clasping his wrist with one of her soft little hands, and with the other gently untying the crimson ribbon which secured his shirt-sleeve.

‘It is not much,’ said Hugo; ‘a mere scratch.’

But he could make no objection to having it examined; it was so sweet to be treated as though he belonged to her, as indeed, by right of her womanhood and his wound, he did for the time.

‘Ah, what a pity Elizabeth is not here!’ ejaculated Joyce, when the dripping shirt-sleeve had been turned up and the wound exposed.

Hugo did not re-echo the sentiment.

‘Why?’ he asked, smiling a little.

‘Because Elizabeth is so clever, and she says my fingers are all thumbs,’ said Joyce, humbly. ‘But indeed I think I can tie it up rightly, if you’ll trust me.’

‘With my life,’ said Hugo.

She took his handkerchief and tied it tightly below the wound, then she took her own and bound it securely round the arm from wrist to elbow, producing a funny little housewife from her hanging

pocket, out of which, after a minute's search, there emerged needle and thread. With these she elaborately stitched up her bandage.

Before it was quite finished, Evelyn returned with the high-crowned hat full of water.

'There!' she said, triumphantly, holding it to his lips. 'Scarcely any is lost.'

'Not for me,' he said, still rather breathlessly. 'Twas for Sir Peregrine. Oh, do you think you could carry it to him? He's past doing any harm now.'

It was impossible to refuse his request, but Evelyn thought she could exactly sympathise with King David's followers when, after they had taken so much trouble to fetch him the water, he poured it all out on the ground. It was hard that he should send it away, not using a single drop. She went off, however, obediently, not much liking her errand, but setting about it bravely, nevertheless.

‘But I shall carry off your handkerchief,’ said Hugo. ‘Will you spare it me as a keepsake?’

‘’Tis a very poor one,’ said Joyce, ‘for you who have done so much for me. And I fear that the wound will be a disagreeable reminder for a long time.’

‘It can’t be disagreeable, if it serves to remind me of you,’ said Hugo. ‘There! we will exchange tokens;’ and he placed in her hand the crimson ribbon which had tied his wristband. ‘Do you know that in Queen Elizabeth’s days the court ladies used to give their friends little handkerchiefs as keepsakes, and the men used to wear them in their hats?’

‘No, I never heard that. Do they do that at court now?’

‘No, not now.’

‘Have you been to the court?’

‘Oh, many a time.’

‘How I should like to see it!’ said Joyce, with a child’s eager curiosity. ‘Is it very, *very* fine?’

'Very fine; but I would not have you there for the world.'

'Why not?'

'Because it never could be a fit place for you. You are good, you see.'

'Good! Why, no,' said Joyce, opening her eyes wide; 'I am not good at all, not even when I try. Damaris says she fears I'm not in a state of grace.'

'I am sure you are!' said Hugo, smiling.

'I don't know,' said Joyce, with a sigh; 'for I never quite understand what it means. But I do hope I'm one of the elect, don't you?'

'I never thought about it particularly,' said Hugo, much amused. 'But I've no objection, if they're a nice set of people!'

Joyce looked so amazed at this daring reply, that he half wished he had not made it. At that moment, however, Evelyn returned, having run a second time to the brook to refill her hat.

'That is good of you!' said Hugo, drinking thirstily. 'How is Sir Peregrine?'

‘Is that the wounded one?’ asked Evelyn.
‘They have helped him on to his horse, and will take him to Mondisfield, to the inn.’

‘Did he speak?’

‘Oh, yes,’ replied the child; ‘but a good deal of it I couldn’t understand. I heard him say, though, that he would be right enough with a few days’ rest, and that he had never expected the young devil to get the better of him. Is the devil young, though? I always thought he was as old as old can be.’

Hugo laughed aloud; even Joyce smiled.

Ah, how sweet it was to rest there in the quiet wood, listening to the talk of these two innocent, fresh, country girls! Should he ever again see anyone so pure, so good, so amusingly unsophisticated? What a gulf lay between their world and his! Why, they barely understood each other’s languages! With a sigh, he struggled to his feet.

‘I must not trouble you longer,’ he

said. 'Good-bye; don't quite forget me.'

'We could never do that,' said Joyce, blushing. 'And we do thank you, sir, for your help.'

He did not say another word, but just raised her hand to his lips, waved a farewell to little Evelyn, and made his way back to the road.

Sir Peregrine and Randolph had disappeared. His own horse was still tied to the silver-birch tree. Denham had apparently gone back for something, for he was just now appearing round a curve in the Newmarket road. The only trace of the eventful afternoon lay in the trodden and blood-stained grass by the wayside. He had but just mounted when Denham rode up.

'Where in the wide world have you been all this time?' he exclaimed. 'I've been hunting high and low for you. Ah! I see. The fair lady has been bandaging her champion's wounds. How now, old

fellow! Are you properly and desperately in love? The fair one was——'

'Spare your jests for once, Denham, there's a good fellow. How is Sir Peregrine?'

'Oh, the old sinner will do well enough. He was so astonished at being worsted that he's quite forgiven you—sang your praises between his groans. You should have heard him, 'twould have melted even your heart of stone.'

Hugo smiled.

'I'm glad he's all right,' he remarked, with a look of relief.

'Yes; I knew you would have gone into eternal mourning if he'd given up the ghost,' remarked Denham. 'You're too good for this wicked world, mine Hugo.'

Hugo raised his eyebrows, remembering what he had felt like beside Joyce. He made no reply, however, and just at that moment there came a sound of running feet. He glanced round and reined in his horse. Evelyn came up panting.

‘Oh,’ she said, in her childish, treble voice, ‘’tis only that I just brought you two of our apples ; they are the biggest King Pippins, very sweet ones.’

CHAPTER II.

MONDISFIELD HALL.

These days are dangerous ;
Virtue is choked by foul ambition
And charity chased hence by rancour's hand.
Foul subornation is predominant,
And equity exiled your Highness' land.

SHAKSPERE.

‘DID he take them, Evelyn?’ asked Joyce, when the last glimpse of the two horsemen had been hidden by a bend in the road.

‘Yes, and seemed pleased,’ said Evelyn. ‘There was such a funny man with him who called me a cherub. I thought cherubs were in heaven and devils in hell. They seem to mix us all up.’

‘We must come home,’ said Joyce, ‘and

tell them all about it. I hope mother won't be vexed; I think it was no fault of ours. Let us come by the road.'

They picked up the almost forgotten basket of blackberries and walked briskly on for about half-a-mile, taking the same direction followed by the horsemen. The road lay now between enclosed fields—fields which belonged to Joyce's father. Presently they reached the park gate; Joyce closed it behind them with a feeling of relief and protection which she had never before known, and in silence the two girls made their way up a smooth, well-kept drive. Cattle were grazing in the broad, grassy avenue sheltered by the stately elm-trees; everything looked orderly, peaceful, and home-like. They crossed the deep moat surrounding the house by a drawbridge which, since the close of the civil war, had been allowed to remain perpetually down, and over which grew a tangled mass of ivy and creepers, then passed on between two smooth grass-

plots, the larger of which was used for a bowling-green, making their way as fast as might be towards the dear home which, though she had always loved it, had never before seemed to Joyce so welcome.

It was a large, three-storied house washed a sort of salmon colour, which was relieved by beams of dark coloured wood, and by a dark tiled roof. There it stood, and there it had stood since the reign of Edward III., though how far the original house resembled the present it was hard to say, since there had been many restorations, almost amounting perhaps, in the long run, to re-building.

‘Mother will be in the south parlour,’ said Joyce. ‘Let us come there first, Evelyn. Mother will not be hard on us, I am sure, and Elizabeth, you know, might be shocked.’

As she spoke, she opened the heavy front door which led into a flagged passage, divided by a wooden screen from the large, old-fashioned dining-hall on the right hand,

while upon the left folding doors led to the kitchen and offices. At the other extreme of the passage facing the front door lay the back entrance leading into the pleasance, and close to this was the door of the south parlour, the cosiest room in all the house. Here in the morning Colonel Wharncliffe read and wrote, while the mother was seeing well to the ways of her household like the good wife in the Proverbs. Here in the afternoon Mrs. Wharncliffe was always to be found sitting with her needlework, and always with ample leisure to hear everyone's troubles, or to give counsel in some perplexing matter which had been of too great moment to be decided by the elder girls. Here in the evening the father and mother sat together, Colonel Wharncliffe being too much of a recluse to be able to bear the company of all six children at once, liking them better by instalments, or better still singly, when he could teach them or talk to them at his leisure.

Very peaceful and homelike did the room look to Joyce that afternoon, with its panelled walls and shining polished floor, its square table covered with the new Turkey carpet, which in those days was considered far too good to tread upon, and its stately high-backed chairs. In the window-seat, a large work-basket open before her, sat Mrs. Wharncliffe. She looked up with a smile as the two girls entered, but put her finger to her lips with a warning 'Hush,' for her husband was reading the news-letter aloud. Written in London some time ago, it had but just arrived at Mondisfield Hall, having been read and re-read by at least half-a-dozen households. It was their nearest approach to a newspaper in those rural districts, and its arrival—which was usually on a Wednesday; but varied much according to the punctuality of the various families who passed it on, and to the state of the weather—was in that quiet household a great event.

Evelyn ran up to her mother and nest-

led down by her side, Joyce stood beside her father listening to the epitome of the week's news. It somehow interested her less than usual. She could not feel any very great concern on hearing of the comet which had been observed near Cancer, and which probably foreboded grave evils to the state. She did not care about the progress of the new Royal Hospital which was being built at Chelsea. Even when the letter went on to describe how the king and his court were amusing themselves at Newmarket, a place not more than ten miles from Mondisfield, she failed to show the eager curiosity which might have been expected from her. Somewhat lifelessly the words fell on her ears.

‘His majesty has been well entertained with musick. The Bury men, the Cambridge men, and the Thetford men, have all had the honour of performing before the king, coming in their cloaks and liveries very formally. His majesty highly

commended them and bestowed upon each company the sum of two guineas. Her majesty the queen has consented to witness the performance of a wonderful mare, the property of one of the officers. This marvellous beast will walk on three legs, will pick up a glove in its mouth and give it to his master while he is upon its back, will feign death, and perform diverse other feats of skill. The king amuses himself much with hawking. The weather has been fine. We learn that Sir George Jeffreys has been sent down to Chester to inquire into the truth of the late riot in favour of the Duke of Monmouth. The Duke of Monmouth has in consequence of this riot been forbidden to go to Whitehall or St. James'. Many of the Whigs are extremely indignant that while their meetings are prohibited as "Seditious" (notably the great Whig banquet which was to have been holden on the 21st of April in this year, which as our readers will remember was not per-

mitted to take place, constables being at their posts, and even the militia under arms to give due force to the prohibition), yet the Tory meetings are all connived at. The influence of the Duke of York increaseth daily.'

'Does a comet tell troubles coming, father?' asked little Evelyn.

'It does not need a comet, my child, to foretell trouble to this nation,' replied Colonel Wharncliffe. 'God only knows what the end of it all will be.'

'We have something to tell you, mother,' said Joyce, a little tremulously; and then helped out by Evelyn she told faithfully all that had happened to them that afternoon. Both parents were more concerned than they cared to appear, but they thought it expedient not to make too much of it before Joyce.

'Probably they were a set of gallants coming back from Newmarket,' said Colonel Wharncliffe. 'It must have given you a sad fright, my little Joy. Don't go

outside the grounds again without either Tabitha or some of your sisters.'

'I think they must have been courtiers,' said Joyce. 'At least our knight said he had been to the court often.'

'Any gentleman can go to the court,—he need not necessarily be a courtier. What did he say to you about it?'

'I asked him what it was like, and he said that he wouldn't have me there for the world,—I think because it was a wicked place. Is it wicked, father?'

'A hell on earth!' said Colonel Wharncliffe, speaking so much more vehemently than usual that Joyce was almost frightened. 'A hell on earth, my child! I would sooner see you in your coffin than at Whitehall.'

'Did you hear the names of any of the gentlemen?' asked Mrs. Wharncliffe.

'Only of the bad one who was conquered; he was Sir Peregrine—we didn't hear his surname. They were going to take him to the "White Horse."'

‘Well, do not trouble your little heads any more about them. Only remember not to go alone again into the lanes.’

‘Oh, dear!’ sighed Evelyn. ‘And the very best blackberries do grow there. What a sad pity, Joyce, that your face is so very pretty, and that the bad man told you so.’

Colonel Wharncliffe stroked his moustache to hide a smile.

‘Is my face pretty, father?’ asked Joyce, lifting her blue eyes to his in grave and earnest inquiry.

It was against all his principles to tell her the truth in this case.

‘That, my little Joy, is a matter you need not trouble yourself about,’ he said. ‘Run and look in the last chapter of the Proverbs, and see what King Solomon said about beauty.’

Joyce went without another word, flew through the long hall to the north parlour, the room which was used as the general family sitting-room, and, disregarding her

sisters, ran up to a small book-case and took down the family Bible. Ah! here was the verse: 'Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.'

Did that answer her question? She went and stood in front of a sloping glass which hung between the two windows, and looked at herself critically. She knew that if it had been a picture instead of a reflection, she should have thought it rather nice. And yet the Bible said that 'beauty' was 'vain.'

'Elizabeth,' she said, half turning round, 'what does vain mean?'

'Looking in the glass,' said Robina, the youngest but one, unable to resist the temptation of turning the laugh against Joyce.

'I mean here,' said Joyce, colouring and showing the words to her eldest sister.

Elizabeth read them and thought for a minute.

'I can tell you,' interposed Damaris, a

tall, pretty-looking girl of nineteen. 'It comes from the Latin *vanus*—empty. Now, Betty, allow that there is some good in learning Latin.'

'How can it be empty?' said Joyce, looking puzzled.

'I suppose,' said wise Elizabeth, with that slow sure judgment of hers which made her the referee of the family—'I suppose it means that beauty is only like the shell of a thing, and, if it is empty, is of little worth. I suppose it ought to be just the outside covering of all that is really good.'

Joyce sighed. It seemed to her that everything harped round to that one theme, that one supreme difficulty—being good. And she was not good, though her knight had thought her so.

'Shells don't get full of water by lying on the beach and thinking how empty they are,' said Frances, the third sister, looking up from her embroidery. 'They must let the great sea rush over them.'

Frances had a way of saying things in parables which always appealed to Joyce's ready imagination; she went up to her room thinking.

'Shall you send down to the "White Horse"?' said Mrs. Wharncliffe to her husband, when the children had left the south parlour. 'I should like to know who these gentlemen are.'

'The mischief-maker must be Sir Peregrine Blake,' replied her husband. 'I recognised him at once from the child's description.'

'What, Sir Peregrine Blake, the magistrate?'

'Ay, more shame to him. He's a bad man, and a dangerous neighbour for me. I'm thankful there are a dozen miles between the houses.'

'That youth must have been a noble fellow. I should like to know who he is.'

'Yes, 'tis no light thing for one moving in such a set to own to keeping a conscience. He must expect hard times. I

would gladly go myself and see him, ay, and thank him heartily; but to-night I dare not risk it. I expect Ferguson, and two others.'

'Will they stop here?' asked his wife.

'No, they will ride over quite late. I shall admit them myself, and they will all be gone again before the household is astir. The servants must not know anything of it, I can't trust their tongues.'

'Is there indeed need of all this secrecy?'

'The utmost need. Even the quietest meeting of friends to discuss the future of this unhappy nation, may be counted treasonable in these days. Were any of my enemies to get wind of it I might be in great peril. To such a pass has "Free England" come!'

He sighed heavily.

'But can you do any good by these discussions?' said his wife.

'Who can say!' he replied, mournfully. 'But so long as the people are denied their rightful share in the government of

the country, so long will there be private conferences between those who love justice and hate despotism.'

'But you would not lend yourself to any rising in favour of the Duke of Monmouth?'

'In the present state of affairs, certainly not,' he replied. 'Insurrection is only justifiable when there is a fair chance of success, and of that, at present, there is none. Tho people at large have not yet perceived how fast the king is robbing them of their liberties.'

'But this Mr. Ferguson they say is much with the Duke of Monmouth. Is it well to have him coming here?'

'I have no great liking for him,' replied Colonel Wharncliffe. 'He is one who loves intrigue for its own sake. But he is everywhere and in everything, and is a bold purveyor of news. You see, dear heart, living in this quiet countryside, one needs a better and more trustworthy news-bringer than such letters as these.' He indicated the news-letter which he had just read.

‘Not content with so full an account as that!’ exclaimed his wife.

‘Dear heart!’ he said, smiling, ‘I have a vision of what a free press in a free country will some day prove, and as yet I can be by no means content. ’Tis by the discontent of the few that the many are at last awakened, you know.’

She sighed. If only this discontent, this noble discontent, did not lead him into danger! But the times were evil, and she knew that both his religious and his political views rendered him an object of dislike and suspicion to the dominant party.

CHAPTER III.

OVERLOOKED.

If thou ask me why, sufficeth, my reasons
Are both good and weighty.

Taming of the Shrew.

‘UNDERSTAND once for all, that I expect implicit obedience, and, what is more to the point, that I will have it. You have behaved like an unruly child, and I shall treat you as such!’

Hugo did not notice the astonished face of the landlady of the ‘White Horse,’ as they passed her on the stairs, nor the terrified look of the country girl who showed them which room was vacant. It did not occur to him that other people

could possibly be frightened by the violent manner and the harsh voice to which he had from his childhood been accustomed. Randolph was extremely angry. He regretted it, was troubled by it. It pained him to have annoyed his brother, whom he worshipped to a degree almost inconceivable, considering the way in which he was treated by him. But then, had he not expected this all along? Had he not known quite well what the manner of his greeting would be? He accepted it as inevitable, and, indeed, was so well prepared for the violent push which hastened his entrance, that instead of measuring his length on the floor of the bedroom, he merely entered somewhat quickly, having calculated the precise moment when passive resistance, concentrated in his shoulders, would avail him.

The door was sharply closed, and locked from the outside, which, as Hugo was quite well aware, meant for him a dismal evening, without lights or supper. It was

certainly a little ignominious, a tame ending to the day on which he had fought his first duel, and worsted a Suffolk magistrate old enough to be his father. But then Hugo did not at present keenly feel humiliations of this sort; he was too quiet, too much wanting in self-assertion, too slow to think of his own rights, too ready to acquiesce in the stronger will which had hitherto, whether for good or for evil, ruled him with a rod of iron. Resistance would have been a trouble—had been a grievous trouble that day. And Hugo loved peace of all things, hated strife and contention, hated any kind of noise; he would have liked to please all parties, or, still better, to be left in unmolested quiet with books instead of people.

To-day, however, a strange and unforeseen disturbance had occurred in the even tenor of his quiet existence; whether he could ever again settle down to the old, peaceful, yielding indifference was a question.

With characteristic coolness, he proceeded to examine his temporary prison with a view to making the most of its advantages. It was a good-sized room; the floor was clean and well scrubbed, the oaken chairs were good of their kind; the four-post bed was hung with gay, red curtains, while the walls were covered with tapestry, representing scenes from Scripture history. On the whole, the room was a good deal more comfortable than his own gloomy little chamber in the Temple. It had not been used lately, however, and was stuffy in the extreme. He crossed over to the casement-window, and flung it open, pausing to take a look at the village. Mondisfield was a fairly large parish, but the houses were scattered, and there was nothing that could be called a village-street. The inn seemed an extraordinarily good one for such a place. But in those days English inns were celebrated, and did their best to make up for the badness of the roads and

the discomforts of slow travelling. Exactly opposite stood the church, with its square, grey tower, while the cows grazing in an adjoining field all stood with their heads turned towards the setting sun, which threw a ruddy glow over the peaceful scene.

‘Twill soon be dark,’ reflected philosophic Hugo. ‘I may as well read while I can.’

And, taking a small book from his pocket, he stretched himself comfortably on the window-seat, and was soon oblivious of all around him.

The room was growing dusk, and the evening air blew in coldly. Hugo read peacefully on, however, until a handful of gravel was flung against the window, some of which fell right in and alighted upon his book.

‘Denham,’ he said to himself. ‘How exactly like him.’

He sprang up, and looked out.

There stood his merry-faced companion.

‘I’ve been trying to come this half-hour!’ he exclaimed, ‘but your brother would stand ranting by the window down below. They’ve drawn the curtain, and put up the shutter now, so all’s safe.’

‘How is Sir Peregrine?’ asked Hugo.

‘Oh, well enough. There isn’t a leech to be found nearer than St. Edmondsbury, so he’ll have to bide his time. Don’t trouble your foolish pate about him—letting blood is the best cure for a hot temper. Look here! I forgot to give you your precious herbs. Catch!’

And, so saying, he threw up the bundle of specimens which Randolph had snatched from the saddle-bow that afternoon.

‘How in the world did you get them?’ asked Hugo, looking much pleased.

‘Went back while your lady-love was bandaging your wound, and, looking for you, lighted by chance upon these. I say, aren’t you hungry?’

‘Awfully,’ returned Hugo. ‘I didn’t know duelling would be such appetising work.’

‘There’s a glorious dish of eggs and bacon making ready ; do you think I could pitch it up to you ?’

‘No,’ said Hugo, laughing. ‘And I wish you’d go, old fellow ; Randolph would be furious if he caught you.’

‘That for Randolph !’ said Denham, with a contemptuous snap of the fingers. ‘Shan’t I throw you up some bread ?’

‘No, no ; I shall do well enough. I’m dog tired, and shall go to sleep. There, I shut up shop, you see ! Good night !’ and, suiting the action to the words, he closed the casement, and soon had the satisfaction of hearing the incautious Denham return to the inn parlour.

It was something to have regained his specimens, though it was too dark to do anything with them now. What a pity Denham had reminded him how hungry he was ! And why should the smell of a savoury supper in preparation rouse such uncomfortable cravings in one’s inner man ? True, he had tasted nothing since they

had left Newmarket, and had since then gone through much. Ah, by the bye, he had at any rate little Evelyn's king-pippins. Having devoured these hungrily enough, he made his preparations for the night, then, in the gathering gloom, knelt reverently while reciting the Lord's Prayer at a pace which was truly surprising. This was a ceremony which nothing would have induced him to give up ; it did not convey very much to him, and yet the mere physical act did in a vague way meet a scarcely conscious demand for worship in his heart.

Just as he was falling asleep, a question flashed across his mind. Would the good Sir Hugo, his ancestor and ideal, have approved his conduct that afternoon ? This brave German knight had from his very childhood been his hero ; he felt it a sort of responsibility to have been actually named after him, and rejoiced that his father had not modernised him into Hugh. To be in ever so slight a degree like this ancestor had always been his

ambition. How would he have reconciled the conflicting duties of obedience and honesty? Would he have obeyed the lawful authority or the inner voice?

Meanwhile, in the room below, Randolph and Denham were making a hearty meal. Neither the thought of Sir Peregrine groaning in the best bed-chamber, nor the recollection of Hugo supperless and weary, could in the least interfere with their hearty enjoyment of the excellent supper provided by the smiling landlady. Nor was Denham at all anxious to quarrel with his companion, though he thought his treatment of Hugo unjust in the extreme.

Rather he sought to make him enjoy himself, hoping to improve his temper, and to render some service to his friend in this way. It was Randolph himself who first mentioned the duel.

‘I confess,’ he said at length, ‘that, apart from his disobedience, which I shall not readily pardon, I don’t altogether

regret what happened. Hugo showed himself more of a man than I expected. It has done him a world of good to be with you.'

Denham laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

'It's a case of a prophet in his own country,' he said, refilling his huge tankard with the excellent home-brewed ale. 'Now, if you were to ask my people, they would say that Hugo was more likely to better me than I to better him.'

'Opinions differ,' said Randolph, drily. 'With all due reference to Sir William Denham, I am not anxious that Hugo should turn into a scientific hermit. That sort of thing is well enough when a man's past fifty. But I've other views for the boy; I wish him to make his way at court.'

'I'll lay you any wager you like that he'll never do it,' said Denham. 'For all his fine voice and his handsome face, there's that in him which will never do for Whitehall.'

‘How can you tell what’s in him? Why, we none of us thought it was in him to act as he acted to-day—he who was ever one to give the wall and take the gutter.’

‘Well, you ought to know him better than I; but, for all that, I’ll bet you a hundred to one that you’ll prove wrong and I shall prove right. Come, will you take it? We’ll sup together after the next autumn races, and see what the year has brought forth.’

‘Agreed,’ said Randolph. ‘But you must in no way influence him against my wishes.’

‘Certainly not; I would far rather see him high in the king’s favour. ’Tis always well to have a friend at court, and, as you say, it is a shame that with his talents he should not make his way in the world.’

As he spoke the door opened, and the landlord of the ‘White Horse’ ushered in a traveller who had just arrived.

‘They will shoe the horse, sir, as quickly as may be; but it is already late,

the roads will be dangerous, and, if your honour will stay the night, you shall have every comfort.'

'I tell you I can't stay the night,' said the new-comer, in a harsh and most unprepossessing voice. 'I've other things to do than to sit by inn fires drinking ale, I can tell you.'

There was a mixture of contempt and boastfulness in his tone and manner which angered the landlord. He was determined to press his hospitalities no further, and abruptly left the room, giving the blacksmith a private hint that he need not hurry himself over the traveller's horse, for he was the sourest cur that had ever darkened his doors. Left to shift for himself, the new guest approached the fire of which he had spoken so disdainfully, bowed stiffly to the two gentlemen, and remarked that it was a cold evening.

Denham, ever ready to talk, endeavoured to draw him into the conversation; but the stranger seemed not at all anxious to

cultivate their acquaintance, and before long produced a shagreen pocket-book, in the contents of which he appeared to become absorbed.

Randolph watched him furtively, yet keenly. Surely it was a face he knew! Ruddy and ill-favoured, with lantern jaws and restless, curious eyes, a face which for its very hideousness lingered in one's memory. It was clever, undoubtedly, and bold; but the boldness bordered on rashness, and the cleverness was overshadowed by the owner's intense self-consciousness and air of importance. Who in the world could he be? And where had they met? Ah! at last he remembered. He had never met the fellow, but he had read such a minute, such a graphic description of him that not to recognise him would have been impossible. He was Ferguson the Presbyterian, the mysterious man who was mixed up with all kinds of conspiracies, who was always suspected of being involved in half-a-dozen plots, whose personality was known

to everyone, and who always managed, by extraordinary good fortune, to be at large. It was currently reported that he bore a charmed life, and indeed his hairbreadth escapes were often almost miraculous. Where could he be going? Was it possible that he was going to see Colonel Wharncliffe? At all hazards he must find out. But he knew better than to risk a direct question. It was not until Denham had drunk himself stupid, and the landlord had returned to announce that the stranger's horse was at the door, that he took any definite action. He quietly left the room then, took his hat and cloak from a stand in the passage and made his way into the dark road.

'Who are those two gentlemen?' asked Ferguson, turning to the landlord as they emerged into the passage.

'I'm sure I can't inform you, sir,' replied that worthy, much pleased that he was really unable to give the desired information to his disagreeable guest. 'They are

but passing travellers just come to-day from Newmarket.'

Ferguson made no comment, but mounting his horse, bade his host good night, and rode off. When he had heard the inn door close, he reined in his horse for a minute and looked round. A small boy was passing by; he hailed him.

'Which is the way to Mondisfield Hall?' he asked, in a slightly lowered voice.

'Right on,' replied the urchin. 'Over the brook yonder till ye come to the cross roads, then to the right till ye come to the park gate on the left.'

'How far is it?'

'A matter of two miles,' replied the boy, touching his hat as the stranger thanked him and rode on.

When he was well out of earshot Randolph calmly emerged from behind the churchyard wall, and, striding irreverently over the grassy mounds, made his way back to the road.

‘First to get Denham settled,’ he said to himself.

And in a matter-of-fact, business-like way he walked into the parlour, coolly assured his drowsy companion that it was very late, and that he must go up to bed, saw him safely upstairs, and then with equal coolness and precision drew the key of Hugo’s prison from his pocket, fitted it with some difficulty in the clumsy lock, and quietly admitted himself into the room. He had not expected to find Hugo in bed, still less to find him asleep, for it was not nearly so late as he had represented to Denham. Drawing aside the red curtains he looked down with an expression of mingled impatience and anxiety at his brother. He was fond of the lad in spite of his austerity, and Hugo looked so weary, yet so comfortable that he was loth to disturb him. But Randolph was not the man to deny himself in any way. Hugo was the only available helper, Sir Peregrine being wounded and Denham far

from sober; moreover, he could trust his brother as he could trust no other living soul.

‘Wake up!’ he said, authoritatively, shaking him with one hand, and holding the candle close to his face with the other.

Hugo started up and rubbed his eyes.

‘What is it?’ he said, sleepily.

‘Put on your things and come out with me,’ said Randolph, concisely.

There was no need to say ‘Be quick!’ for Hugo was up before he could have spoken the words, showing no trace of ill-temper at being thus roused, strangling his yawns while he dressed, half-asleep, but, as usual, promptly and unquestioningly obedient.

Not a word passed between the two brothers, they were never a talkative pair, and Hugo knew that he was still in disgrace and would not have presumed to speak before he was spoken to. Randolph watched him with a certain admiration, he was so quick, so well trained, so wonder-

fully loyal. In a very few minutes he was ready and the two went downstairs, Hugo much wondering what was about to happen, and half fearing that Sir Peregrine must have died. A question trembled on his lips but he would not put it, only when they met the landlord down below in the passage, he listened eagerly for Randolph's explanation.

'We shall be out for a time, don't lock up till we return.'

'Certainly, your honour,' said the host, bowing obsequiously. 'Tis a fine night, gentlemen, but cold.'

He opened the door for them, Randolph pausing for a minute to light his pipe, then strolling out leisurely as though he were merely going to take an evening ramble. When they had gone a few hundred yards, however, he suddenly quickened his pace, walking so fast indeed that Hugo had as much as he could do to keep up with him. Where could they be going? The night was dark and cloudy enough to make

walking along the rough roads no easy matter; they hailed the light which yet lingered in a few of the wayside cottages. Ah! here was the brook which he and Denham had forded on horseback that afternoon. It flowed right across the road, but there was a narrow plank at the side for foot passengers. They crossed this, and walked on in silence to the cross roads. With great curiosity Hugo waited to see which turn they should take.

‘Right wheel!’ said Randolph, shortly, and they mounted the slight hill.

Was he, perhaps, going to the scene of the duel? And if so, why? Randolph cleared his throat! Was an explanation at last coming?

‘I have brought you with me to-night, Hugo,’ he began, ‘because you are one of the few people whom I can in all things trust.’

Hugo’s heart beat quickly. This from Randolph was indeed high praise.

‘We will say no more about your be-

haviour this afternoon. For this once, I overlook it. What is more, I now give you an opportunity of proving your loyalty to me.'

'What are we going to do?' asked Hugo, unable to keep the question back any longer.

'That is at present no concern of yours. Suffice it to say that I hope to-night's work will be useful both to you and me, and—what is of more importance—to the King himself. Now, can I depend upon you?'

'Yes,' said Hugo, eagerly.

'This is all I ask of you,' continued Randolph. 'Observe, remember, and hold your tongue till I bid you speak.'

'I will,' said Hugo, inwardly wondering what Randolph had in hand.

Again they walked on in silence, picking their way as best they could among the ruts. At length they reached the gate which led to Mondisfield Hall. Randolph softly opened it, cautiously closed

it. They stood within the park, and, with something of awe, Hugo glanced around. It was all so solemn and still. The broad avenue, with its grassy glades and its giant elms, looked like the nave of some vast cathedral; the night wind sighed and moaned. Hugo shivered. Somehow a feeling of unconquerable distaste, even of dread, arose within him. To what had he pledged himself? What was this mysterious work which was to benefit the king? As he mused, Randolph turned.

‘Tread lightly, and don’t so much as whisper. Merely follow me.’

What was this work which could lead his brother to steal like a thief towards an unknown dwelling? Well! he was in for it now, and there could be no turning back.

By this time they had reached the moat, and were within easy sight of the house. There was no very great risk of being seen, for the night was cloudy. Randolph bent almost double, however, as

they crossed the drawbridge, nor did he venture to walk upright till they had reached the comparative shelter of the high hedge overshadowed by stately fir-trees which bordered the lesser of the two lawns. Stealthily, almost noiselessly, they crept on, Randolph keenly anxious, Hugo utterly miserable. His whole nature rose up against this mysterious work, whatever it might be. To observe, to remember, and to hold his tongue! Well, he could hardly help keeping the first two injunctions; naturally his eyes were sharply watchful at such a time, nor was he likely to forget anything which might come under his notice in this objectionable way. Most assuredly, also, he was not likely to mention to any living soul a proceeding which even now, dimly as he understood it, caused him such shame.

Softly Randolph approached the window on the left of the door, crept in among the bushes which surrounded it, looked and listened. There was neither a sound

nor a ray of light. He emerged from the shrubs, and led the way past the great door, over the smooth approach, to the grassy terrace beyond. There were no more shrubs now, nor even a border to betray their footmarks; the grass grew to the very wall, and, what was better, the next window was protected neither by curtain nor shutter. It was somewhat high from the ground, but on a convenient level for their eyes. With much curiosity, Hugo looked in. He saw, in the dim light, a large wainscotted hall, set round with stately old furniture. As far as he could make out, there was the usual minstrels' gallery at one end, but at the opposite end, both he and his brother instantly perceived that rays of light were streaming through the cracks in a doorway which apparently led to some other room. Randolph beckoned to him to come on. A second huge window looked into the same hall, then the outer wall projected a little, and there were two more

windows, much narrower and much nearer the ground. This was clearly the room from which the light had proceeded; and now, indeed, drawing quite close, they could see that light streamed through two large cracks in the window-shutter as well, and, in the stillness of the night, could detect a low hum of voices. Noiselessly they both crept close to the glass, so close, indeed, that their eyelashes actually brushed the panes.

The whole of the room was distinctly visible to each. It was a large, long room, wainscotted in a sort of yellow-brown colour, and hung with oil paintings, evidently portraits of the family. The fire had burnt low; on the table in the middle of the room was a lamp, and at one end the remains of supper. At the opposite end, facing the windows, sat four men talking together. One of them was Ferguson. Randolph recognised him again in a moment. He was speaking in his harsh voice, apparently with great

earnestness, while the two younger men seemed to hang upon his words as though he were some oracle. The eldest of the party, and evidently the master of the house, sat with his head resting on his hands, and in his grave, dark face there was nothing of the eager hopefulness plainly visible in the looks of the others. With his long, dark hair, his stern features, his expression of quiet sadness, he might have sat as a typical representation of sorrow without hope. Ferguson waxed more loud and eager. His words reached the two listeners outside.

‘The people can not, shall not—and, mark me, *will* not endure a Popish tyrant. You all of you know that, and would fain fight again for the Exclusion Bill, were there but a Parliament. And once more mark my words! The King is but a Papist in disguise, and in that worse than his brother, who at least is an honest man.’

Apparently the master of the house strove to moderate the speaker’s energy.

He bent forward, and said something, which was inaudible to the two invisible spectators. After that, only a low hum of voices reached them. Ferguson produced his shagreen pocket-book, and began to read them extracts, and once the master of the house crossed the room, and, opening a book-case with glass doors, took down a volume to search for some reference. This brought him so near to the window, that Hugo's heart began to beat at double time. The man had such a noble face, that he could not endure the idea that Randolph meditated denouncing him to the government. Worse still, that he himself might be used as the second witness.

Suddenly his heart almost ceased to beat. With eyes opened to their widest extent, he stared at the apparition which, with gliding, ghostly motion, appeared upon the scene. Noiselessly the door had opened; noiselessly there walked in a white-robed figure. The two younger

men uttered exclamations of terror, even Ferguson looked startled as the figure advanced slowly towards the book-case, and seemed about to open it. Good Heavens! it was no apparition! It was Joyce herself—Joyce, whom Hugo had thought never to see again. And better far, so he bitterly felt, that he had never again seen her, rather than see her in such a manner. Alas! alas! had he been brought to play the spy on her father?

‘’Tis but my little daughter,’ he heard the master of the house explain to his guests. ‘She has the habit of walking in her sleep; but ’tis many years since she was troubled with it.’ Then going up to her, ‘Joyce dear, come with me.’

‘She’ll wake up and discover us!’ suggested one of the party, looking much concerned.

‘I don’t think it,’ said the father. ‘But keep still. Joyce, my love, come.’

The girl instinctively turned towards

him. He took her hand in his arm, and quietly led her out of the room.

Hugo felt a touch on his arm. Randolph motioned to him to come, and stealthily they crept back through the garden, across the moat, and out into the park. It was not till they were safely in the road again that Randolph spoke.

‘You have done extremely well,’ he said, ‘and shown no small self-control. That ghostly-looking maid was enough to put a fellow off his guard.’

‘Tell me now why you brought me here?’ said Hugo, in a voice which even to himself sounded unnatural.

‘Because I wanted a second witness, and had reason to believe that we might be able to hunt down a nest of conspirators.’

‘What do you know about the master of the house? Why do you wish to get him into trouble?’

Randolph gave a short laugh.

‘Shall I tell you his name?’ he said.
‘His name is Francis Wharncliffe.’

Hugo almost gasped.

‘And that was his daughter?’ he asked.

‘Ay, that was one of his six daughters, and you and I may thank a merciful Providence that he has no son, otherwise I should never come into the property.’

At last Hugo understood the reason of his brother’s conduct. A few days, nay, a few hours before it would scarcely have shocked him ; he would not have troubled himself to think twice about the matter. But that afternoon he had been awakened, sharply and thoroughly. A vision of good, a vision of evil, had presented themselves to him, and the spirit of manly independence had been roused within him. He felt like one who rises from dreams of blissful and luxurious ease, to find that all the pleasant existence was an illusion, while life, hard, perplexing, full of cares and contradictions, has to be faced and fought.

‘Mind this,’ said Randolph, after a pause. ‘You must on no account betray our name to anyone at the inn. No one must suspect that we are kinsmen to the lord of the manor.’

‘Is there need for all this mystery?’ said Hugo, in a tone of disgust.

‘Certainly there is need of it if I say so. You forget yourself.’

Randolph spoke angrily, and Hugo thought it expedient to make no reply. Wearily he plodded on, almost too tired to feel very acutely, or to wish very much for anything but that they were back at the ‘White Horse.’

‘You are faint,’ remarked Randolph at length, noticing with what an effort he kept from lagging behind. And with rough kindness he drew his arm within his. Hugo winced.

‘Good Lord!’ exclaimed Randolph, really concerned. ‘I had forgot Sir Peregrine stuck you. Here, come the other side. Is it much?’

‘Oh, no, a mere scratch,’ said Hugo, beginning to step out briskly.

In all his life Randolph had never spoken to him with so much solicitude, nor had the two brothers ever before walked arm-in-arm. It made up to Hugo for all the trouble and perplexity of the day, and his heart throbbed with eager delight as his guardian added,

‘You fought well, and I was proud of you.’

CHAPTER IV.

A WARNING.

The generous Christian must as well improve
I' th' quality of the serpent as the dove;
He must be innocent, affraid to do
A wrong, and crafty to prevent it too,
They must be mixt and temper'd with true love:
An ounce of serpent serves a pound of dove.

FRANCIS QUARLES.

THE next day was a Sunday. Hugo slept late, was in fact only roused by the bells of the village church chiming for morning service. The sun was shining brightly, the sky was cloudless; it was one of those still autumn days when winter seems yet far off, and Nature enjoys a sort of halcyon calm. Hugo's wound was painful, much more painful than on the pre-

vious day ; spite, too, of the sunshine, and the gaily pealing bells, and the country quiet, he awoke with a heavy consciousness of coming trouble, which was curiously foreign to him. He dressed rapidly, and went down to the inn parlour. The sanded floor, the blazing fire, and the well-laden breakfast-table looked tempting. His brother was not there, only Denham was at the table, dividing his attentions between a dish of excellent trout and a comely serving wench.

He waved the girl aside as Hugo entered, and the two friends were left to themselves.

‘So, mine Hugo!’ ejaculated Denham, ‘are you recovered from your duelling?’

‘Nearly,’ said Hugo. ‘Where is Randolph?’

‘Somewhere between this and St. Edmondsbury, at what exact point I am unable to inform you.’

‘What has he gone there for?’ asked Hugo, astonished and slightly alarmed.

‘Well, you must know that while you were in the arms of Morpheus, and, by-the-by, you must have more than slept the clock round, the leech from St. Edmondsbury arrived. Such a pompous apothecary as you never saw. Sir Peregrine will do well enough, don’t alarm yourself.’

‘But, Randolph——’

‘Went to St. Edmondsbury on his own behoof and not on Sir Peregrine’s, I’ll warrant you. Look here! an’ you can keep a secret and will swear not to tell Randolph that I told you, you shall hear the whole matter. After Sir Peregrine had been well physicked, bled, bandaged and so forth, the worthy leech came down and breakfasted with us. We talked of one thing and another, and presently he let fall that he knew the family at the Hall and had in former years oftentimes visited them.

“‘What kind of man is Colonel Wharncliffe?” asked your brother.

‘Said the leech, “A most dangerous

man, a known Republican, and, what is worse, he has without let or hindrance given his biggest barn to a set of vile conventiclers who meet there unmolested every Sunday."

'Said your brother, "Why is it allowed when contrary to law?"

'Said the leech, shaking his head, "Colonel Wharncliffe was a pleasant-spoken man and respected by the people, and none in those parts would inform against him."

'By-and-by, when the leech had gone to have a last look at Sir Peregrine, Randolph told me what, doubtless, you know, that he hated this kinsman of yours like sin, and wanted to oust him. He says this may be a stepping-stone, and will at least get the colonel heavily fined, if not imprisoned. Moreover, it will put a stop to the conventicle, which is safe to be a den for breeding Protestant plots.'

'And Randolph has gone to St. Edmondsbury to inform?'

‘Ay; though of course not under his own name. Then this morning, when the good folks are on their knees, there will be a dramatic entertainment—enter a dozen wolves in soldier’s clothing, who disperse the lambs and arrest the shepherds. I’ve a good mind to be there to see.’

Hugo made scarcely any comment on this long speech. His reputation for dreamy indifference stood him now in good stead, and Denham had not the faintest idea that while he quietly discussed his plateful of fish and drank the home-brewed ale, he was racking his brain for some means of frustrating his brother’s scheme. Dared he do it? Dared he absolutely work against Randolph, check him in a matter for which he cared so much and must have swallowed down so many scruples? It seemed as if he were always fated to have Randolph on one side and Joyce on the other, as if he were to be forced to choose between them. What was worse, it seemed to be justice and independence

pitted against tyranny and lawful authority. In the small arena of his private life he had to fight the same battle, make the same choice which lay before the nation at large.

‘Going to church?’ asked Denham.

‘Yes,’ said Hugo, mechanically.

‘Then you had best look sharp about it. And look here, just give the serving wench a call; she may as well clear the decks.’

‘And amuse you,’ added Hugo, with a smile.

He was not sorry to be rid of his companion, and, taking up his broad-brimmed hat fringed all round with ostrich feathers, he left the inn and crossed over the way to the church. He took a seat close to the door, mechanically holding his hat before his eyes for a minute after his usual custom, but too much engrossed with thoughts of Colonel Wharncliffe’s danger to attempt anything but the outward gesture. The parson and the clerk were reading the psalms between them; so few of the people

could read that they could hardly be expected to make many of the responses. Perhaps merely because the words fitted in with the subject of his thoughts, one verse startled him into sudden attention. 'Thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy, but hast set my feet in a large room.'

What distinct thought the words brought to him it would be hard to explain, but a consciousness that God would have freedom, breadth, and, above all, no persecution, somehow dawned upon him. The 'I' of the psalms became to him the distant kinsman whose fate was practically in his hands.

'I became a reproof among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours; and they of mine acquaintance were afraid of me; and they that did see me without conveyed themselves from me.'

'Fear is on every side, while they conspire together against me, and take their counsel to take away my life.'

‘My time is in Thy hand; deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.’

‘Oh, how plentiful is Thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee.’

‘Thou shalt hide them privily by Thine own presence from the provoking of all men; Thou shalt keep them secretly in Thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues.’

Thus here and there sentences flashed forth with new meaning in the old words,— words which, true at the time to human nature, must be true throughout the ages.

But then as to Randolph? If he found out who had frustrated his plans, his wrath would be something barely endurable! And, after all, why should he defend a man with whom he did not agree, and defend him at such risk to himself?

It has been left for a modern thinker to frame the noble maxim, ‘Conscience is higher than consequences,’ but yet it was the dim perception of this truth, a truth which he could not have put into words,

which made Hugo at last decide that come what might he would warn the congregation in the barn. He tore a leaf from his pocket-book, and, during the reading of the lessons, wrote the following lines :—

‘SIR,—An informer has this morning lodged an information against you at St. Edmondsbury, as one who frequenteth conventicles. The informer will endeavour, and I doubt not will succeed, to bring over sufficient force to scatter the congregation and to arrest the leading members. Be advised by one who loveth not persecution, and for the present discontinue your meetings.’

Having folded and directed this missive, he sat patiently waiting for the end of the second lesson. Through the pointed windows the sunshine streamed brightly, glorifying the simple gothic arches and pillars. The village church was plain enough and bare enough to please a Puritan ; there was not a vestige of colour in it, and, contrasted with his glorious Temple Church, it

seemed to Hugo cold and even ugly. And yet, as he sat there looking at the golden sunshine flickering among the shadows of the trees cast on the chancel wall, he felt a strange love for the place, the sort of love we bear to all places where we have had a glimpse of something which was before unknown to us.

‘He that is not against us is on our part,’ read the old clergyman. ‘For whosoever shall give you a cup of cold water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.’

The congregation stood up to sing the ‘Jubilate,’ such of them, at least, as did not turn to look at the young gallant who, having behaved strangely enough all the service, now got up and left the church, a proceeding which caused the village worthies to shake their heads.

‘Better have stayed to ogle the girls through the sermon,’ they agreed afterwards, ‘than go out just when parson had

given forth "Oh be joyful in the Lord all ye lands, come before His presence with a song." Instead of 'coming' the graceless gallant 'went.'

There was not a minute to be lost; he almost ran for the greater part of the two miles, indeed, by the time he reached the large barn which stood by the wayside not far from the entrance to the Mondisfield farm-yard, he was so much out of breath that he was obliged to wait some minutes before he was cool and collected enough to enter the place and deliver his letter. In the meantime, through a hole in the wooden wall, he looked in at the congregation.

The barn was large and lofty; at one end was stacked a quantity of golden corn, in the centre at a wooden desk stood a little, insignificant man, preaching. Before him, some sitting on rough benches, some on the floor, were ranged in rows about forty men and women, all listening to the discourse with rapt attention. When the words found any special echo in their hearts,

notably when the preacher alluded to the need of courage and patience under present persecution, there was a low hum of agreement, a sort of subdued applause, which surprised and somewhat amused Hugo, who was utterly at a loss to understand how sane people could prefer to worship in a draughty barn, at serious risk to their lives and to their property, when the village church had been built on purpose for them. There was something very remarkable, however, in the spectacle. They were all so desperately in earnest, religion was to them such a tremendous reality. As he watched their serious faces, their expression of intense listening, he was reminded somehow of a day in Westminster Abbey when he had watched the deeply reverential manner of good Bishop Ken. Each sight stirred within him a dim perception that there were more things in Heaven and earth than were dreamed of in his philosophy. Could it be that as in childhood he had cared

only for flowers because of their beauty and fragrance, knowing nothing of their structure nor dreaming that science could open his eyes to a new world of beauty within—could it be so also with religion? Had he as yet only a vague satisfaction in something that seemed to him beautiful? Was there indeed for him the possibility of a deeper knowledge, a clearer revelation. If so, what in these matters was the microscope? and who stood in the position of Mr. Robert Hooke, perpetual secretary to the Royal Society, and author of ‘Micrographia’?

‘Men can rise above the circumstances in which they are placed,’ urged the preacher, with an emphasis that roused Hugo from his own thoughts. ‘Look at Paul, read what he tells of his hard times. Was he conquered by ’em, think you? No, no, he rose above ’em, turned ’em into means of glorifying the Master. You *must* rise above the circumstances in which you are placed! if you don’t, your

circumstances will swallow you up, will drag you down lower and lower.'

Here the good man fell to talking of 'Election,' and consequently Hugo's attention flagged, the speaker no longer appealed to him. He shifted his position and looked through a fresh hole. Ah! there was the man he wanted! and close beside him there sat Joyce, sweet Joyce with her grave blue eyes fixed on the preacher,—perhaps still wondering whether she were one of the 'elect.' Good heavens! and he was lingering here in the luxury of watching her, when delay might mean danger to her whole family! Feeling more of a black-sheep and an outsider than he had ever felt in his life before, he opened the door of the barn and with slightly heightened colour walked right through the space which lay between the preacher and the rows of listeners until he reached the bench where with his wife and his six children sat his unknown kinsman.

The congregation in their sad-coloured clothes stared suspiciously at the new comer. Dark green and rich crimson, flowing locks and fantastic feathers, seemed very much out of place in the barn. What did the stranger mean by composedly stalking right through their assembly in this way? It was an untoward event, and doubtless boded no good to the way-side conventicle. Looks of suspicion, looks of fear, looks of uncontrollable dislike fell upon him as he quietly made his way on. He was fully conscious of them, but as usual whatever inward perturbation he might have felt was veiled entirely by the calm indifferent manner which invariably characterised him.

‘Read it without delay,’ he whispered, handing the note to Colonel Wharncliffe, who in undisguised astonishment glanced first at the missive, then at the bearer. One swift look at Joyce, one recognising return glance from her clear childlike eyes,

then again he ran the gauntlet of the doubtful and perplexed nonconformists and quitted the assembly.

Scarcely had he closed the great wooden door, however, with elaborate care, courteously anxious to make as little disturbance as might be, when it was hastily re-opened and Colonel Wharnccliffe hurried after him.

‘I have to thank you, sir, for your very considerate communication,’ he said. ‘I hope you will be good enough to let me know to whom I am indebted?’

‘Not to me,’ said Hugo. ‘But to the spirit of justice which, though you may not think it, does find a dwelling-place in the heart of many a Churchman.’

‘I can well believe that,’ said the colonel. ‘We do not wish to assume any superiority, merely to claim our right as free Englishmen to worship God in our own way. But, pray, let me know your name, for I have a notion that you must be the same gentleman who courteously succoured my little daughter but yesterday.’

‘That, sir, was an act for which I need no thanks,’ said Hugo, quietly. ‘The reward lay in the doing. As for my name I would rather withhold it, and I pray you to pardon me.’

‘It must be as you think best,’ said the colonel, with some regret in his tone. ‘I thank you none the less heartily; your information will have saved many a heart-ache this day.’

Hugo seemed scarcely to hear him, he was listening intently to a sound of distant hoofs, far away as yet but certainly approaching them along the St. Edmondsbury road.

‘For God’s sake, sir, disperse the meeting instantly,’ he exclaimed. ‘I hear horsemen drawing near. And show me some hiding-place for the moment,—I am undone if my guardian sees me.’

‘There! under the willows,’ said the colonel, pointing to the other side of the road, where across fertile fields wound the Mondisfield brook, surrounded by a thick

jungle of rushes, willow herb, and low bushes.

Without another word Hugo sprang across the broad ditch which bordered the field, and was soon lost to sight among the tangled green labyrinth. The colonel did not pause to watch him, he had the safety of the whole congregation to think of. Promptly he returned to the barn, shut and barred from within the double doors, and, signing to the minister to pause, said, in a clear, authoritative voice,

‘My friends we are in great danger. We must disperse and that instantly. Hurst!’ turning to one of his men, ‘throw open the doors into the stack-yard. Now make all speed into the park, and keep not in one body but scatter yourselves in groups. Let the women and such as cannot run follow on to the Hall where we will shelter them.’

The words produced a chorus of exclamations, but the nonconformists showed nothing like panic; with grave, anxious faces,

with prompt submission, they obeyed the colonel. There was little if any confusion, only great speed, great quietness, while through the stack-yard in different directions fled the peaceable congregation, who but a few minutes before had been gravely listening to the assurance that 'men can rise above the circumstances in which they are placed.'

Mrs. Wharncliffe hurriedly led the way to the house, helping on a poor woman who was burdened with two little children; five of the daughters followed her, each guiding or assisting one of those who were deemed too old or infirm to make their escape. Only Joyce still lingered, she could not bear to leave before her father, who like the captain of a vessel stayed to the very last. Her heart beat so fast that it nearly choked her, and yet all the time she was conscious of the sort of pleasure she had felt once when her pony ran away with her, a sense of risk, a demand for high courage, and strength, and coolness.

And now the sound of horses' hoofs had stopped, but only to give place to a much more alarming sound, the sound of men's voices. Loud voices declaring that 'this was the place, this the accursed conventicle, this the vile preaching-shop.'

'Joy! are you here!' exclaimed Colonel Wharncliffe, for the first time becoming conscious of her presence. 'We are too late now to run, child. Here,—this way!' and seizing her hand he dragged her after him into the nearest outhouse.

'The loft,' he whispered, motioning her towards a rough ladder. Joyce could climb like a squirrel; she was up in the loft in less than a minute, crouching down among the hay with her father's arm round her.

Heavy blows were being dealt on the barn doors; at length they gave way, and from their place in the loft, which was on the side of the yard immediately facing the barn, Joyce and the colonel could see that a body of about twenty men broke

in. There was a murmur of disappointment when they found that the place was empty.

‘I made sure we should have been in time,’ said the leader, turning to a gentleman richly dressed in crimson and wearing a long peruke. ‘Some one has given them notice of your intention, your honour, for you see spite of our hot haste the birds are flown.’

Randolph frowned. Inwardly he was in a towering rage; but he answered, with cold composure, ‘It is impossible that they can have been warned. Who could have warned them?’

‘Your honour knows best to whom you imparted the fact of your mission to St. Edmondsbury.’

Denham! could Denham have betrayed him? Could Hugo possibly have got wind of his intention, and once again have been troubled by a conscience, that truly undesirable possession? It was barely possible, and yet who else could have done

it? Vowing vengeance on the unknown destroyer of his hopes, he turned once more to the chief constable.

‘What are these idiots doing?’ he asked, angrily pointing to the men who were smashing up the benches and splintering the desk which served as pulpit into a hundred fragments.

‘We have orders, your honour, in every case to strip the conventicles,’ returned the man, ‘we always break up the pews and pulpit, but i’ faith there’s little enough to wreck in this poor place. It will serve to remind them though another day.’

‘But we waste time!’ said Randolph, impatiently. ‘Why not order the men up to the Hall, where there might be some hope of catching this fanatical colonel?’

‘We can up to the Hall, sir, an you will,’ said the constable. ‘But I can’t arrest the colonel unless he be found a-praying or a-preaching, or a-worshipping somehow with over the lawful number.’

‘Confound your scruples!’ said Randolph, angrily, ‘I tell you he’s a pestilent treason-monger, a vile conventicler, ‘one who harbours heretics and preachers.’

‘Very like, sir, very like,’ said the constable. ‘But I’ve only a warrant to arrest such as be found a-worshipping in unlawful ways, I can’t go beyond my warrant, sir.’

‘Confound you and your warrant too,’ exclaimed Randolph, furiously. ‘Bring your men on to the Hall at once. Perchance we may yet find the knave on his knees.’

The chief gave the word of command, and instantly the men formed in a column and marched through the stack-yard, passing close under the loft where the colonel and Joyce crouched among the hay. Joyce hid her face in sudden panic as the slow tramp of their feet drew nearer and nearer. It was hard to realise that they could see and yet not be seen, and not until the steps were retreating in the dis-

tance did she dare to look forth. How strange it seemed that their own stack-yard, where only the day before yesterday they had been merrily playing at 'Barley Break,' should now be the scene of such an alarming incursion? Tramp, tramp, tramp, gradually the sound of the many feet died away into silence, and the last glimpse of the crimson hat of the hot-tempered gentleman disappeared.

'Oh, father!' exclaimed Joyce. 'Who can that be, and why does he so hate you?'

'I know not, child. 'Tis a face that is wholly strange to me,' replied the colonel. 'Doubtless he is the guardian, of whom that brave lad spoke to me but now. See, we will come from our hiding place now that they are well out of view. They can do no mischief, thank God! up at the house. Come with me, child, we must keep out of the way till they have dispersed.'

Together they emerged from the out-house, and, passing out of the yard, crossed the road and made their way into the field

where Hugo lay hid. Joyce breathed more freely when they were safely sheltered by the willows. Till then she had hardly dared to look behind her. Suddenly she paused and clutched her father's arm.

'I see a man's head!' she whispered. 'There, hid low among the bushes.'

'It is our loyal preserver,' said the colonel. 'I must speak a few words with him. From what passed between the constable and my unknown foe, I fear he will get into trouble.'

'Oh!' said Joyce, 'then 'twill be the second time he has suffered through helping us. Can you not save him, father, warn him of the danger?'

'Thank heaven! you are safe!' exclaimed Hugo, raising himself as they approached him. 'I greatly feared my warning had been too late.'

'We are safe, thanks to you,' replied the colonel, warmly. 'And now it is solely on your account that I am anxious. Tell me

where would it raise least suspicion for your guardian to find you ?

‘At Mondisfield Church were there time to reach it,’ said Hugo. ‘But I fear to try, lest he should overtake me on the road.’

‘We will show you a much nearer track across the fields,’ said Colonel Wharncliffe. ‘See, as the crow flies it is but a short distance. The congregation are, I trust, all escaped by now, and I and my daughter cannot do better than take a quiet walk in the fields, for which at present no man can arrest us.’

‘I hope, sir, your wound is doing well,’ said Joyce, shyly, as they walked rapidly on.

‘Thanks to your skilful bandaging, it is healing fast,’ he replied. And then Colonel Wharncliffe referred to the duel, and a desultory conversation ensued which afterwards Hugo could not recall, though he could remember every change in Joyce’s face, every glance from those heavenly eyes, every tone of her clear childish voice.

Yet ever mingled with the rapture of being near her was a miserable sense of unworthiness, a wretched consciousness that against his will he had watched them last night when they little suspected it. Worse still, that at any time he might be required to give evidence against the colonel. His usually tranquil face bore traces of trouble and anxiety which did not escape Colonel Wharncliffe. He felt sorry for the boy, drawn to him strongly, unaccountably. Would he in his life of temptation manage to 'rise above the circumstances in which he was placed'? Recalling the far stronger face of the guardian, and realising how much it had cost the lad to go against him that day, he could not feel very hopeful.

All too soon they reached the end of their walk; sadly enough Hugo raised Joyce's little hand to his lips, and turned to bid farewell to her father.

'I shall never fail to think of what you have done for us this day,' said the colonel,

grasping his hand, 'God grant the rest of your life be in tune with this beginning.'

Hugo turned away, feeling positively choked. Oh, God! that this *had* been the beginning! That blind obedience had not landed him in such a strait! that habitual submission had not almost paralysed his will! And Joyce, sweet blue-eyed Joyce! He should never see her again, never be able to tell her of his love, never, never in the most distant future dare to dream of her as his wife. Overwhelmed with the new consciousness of his weakness, he re-entered the village church. The sermon had been long, and now there lingered some half-dozen country people, for it was the first Sunday of the month, 'Sacrament Sunday,' as they called it. At first Hugo could not make out what had happened, but it was a relief to find that the service was not over, and that for the present he was safe from Randolph. How strange it seemed that while the old clergyman had been slowly proceeding with the morning

service, he should have lived through what seemed like half a lifetime !

How it happened he never quite knew, but as he mechanically knelt on in one of the high pews, dimly conscious that the old man in the chancel was reading some prayer, two words seemed to separate themselves from the unintelligible surroundings. ' Do this !'

In his misery, in his shame, in his hopelessness, it occurred to him for the first time that here was a command which he had neglected. And so it came to pass that behind all the villagers, pausing even for the old cripple in the smock frock, the stranger walked up the aisle and knelt at the altar rails.

He came so quietly that the villagers did not notice him, but the old clergyman was sorely perplexed. Here was a stranger who had behaved very oddly, who had come in late, left in the Jubilate, returned in the middle of the communion service, and having missed both confession and

absolution presented himself at the altar, though in all probability he was the very man who had fought the duel by the roadside which was already the talk of the village. What in the world was he to do? Moving from one to another of the communicants he had arrived at no definite conclusion when he found himself opposite the new comer. Involuntarily he paused, half hesitating. The stranger's head was bent low, he raised it now, however, the clergyman gave him one searching glance, and after that hesitated no more.

‘I fear me you have done an illegal thing,’ said his wife, as they walked home to the vicarage together.

‘Confound legality!’ said the old parson, who was not at all above swearing. ‘I tell you he had the face of a Chrisom child! I couldn’t have refused him.’

CHAPTER V.

HUGO MEETS A PATRIOT.

GLoucester. The noble and true-hearted Kent
banished ! his offence, honesty !

'Tis strange.

King Lear. Act I, Scene 2.

FOOL. Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb.

KENT. Why, fool ?

FOOL. Why, for taking one's part that's out of
favour : nay, an thou canst not smile as the wind
sits, thou'lt catch cold shortly.

King Lear. Act I, Scene 4.

It needed no comet, as Colonel Wharncliffe
very truly remarked, to foretell national
troubles in the year 1682. Never perhaps
in the whole history of the country had the
political, social, and religious outlook been
more gloomy.

Rivers of blood had been shed scarcely

half-a-century before to preserve the liberties of England and to protest against absolutism and tyranny: yet in this year the majority of the nation seemed willingly to acquiesce in the illegal encroachments of the King. The preceding generation had dearly bought the nation's right of Representative Government: yet tamely, miserably, contemptibly the succeeding generation submitted once again to the Stuart despotism. The Exclusion Bill had been rejected by the Lords, mainly through the King's influence. The General Election of the year 1681, which had produced so much excitement, so much eager expectation in the country, had proved worse than useless. The new parliament summoned by the King to Oxford in the month of March was dissolved by him in April; while so great was the fear and distrust of both parties, that the Commons thought it prudent to surround themselves with a strong escort, and the King was accompanied by his guards.

From this time dated the era of the 'Second Stuart Tyranny,' to be ended—as all tyrannies must be ended—by a Revolution.

How it came to pass that Englishmen endured such a state of things for years, it is indeed difficult to surmise. Perchance the chief blot on the annals of the Commonwealth—the execution of the King—at length avenged itself, the bad seed bearing now its bitter fruit in a certain inexplicable attachment to the son of the beheaded monarch,—a man who deserved such attachment even less than his father. However it was, the fact remains, that the country submitted to be ruled by a tyrant, to be without a parliament, to lose the high position among European nations gained for England by Cromwell, and to be bought by Louis XIV. into political slavery, the price of which served partly to keep the King's mistresses.

One great barrier still stood, however, in Charles's way. There could not be abso-

lute government while the charters of the city of London and of the other cities remained. Consequently all his efforts were bent to induce the cities either by fair means or foul to cede their ancient privileges, and the journals of the time show all too plainly with what criminal speed they complied with the Royal suggestion, and surrendered their charters.

The social outlook was even worse than the political. The reaction from Puritan intolerance and ultra-gravity had of course come about at the Restoration, and liberty had degenerated into licence. But this alone is insufficient to account for the blatant wickedness of the reign of Charles II. A wave of vice seemed to pass over the country, vice became the fashion. If anyone dared to condemn the fashion he was set down as a narrow-minded Puritan, and speedily snubbed. Shame was in those days an unknown quantity. 'The quality of mercy' was mentioned now and then by Portia in the

playhouse, and by the priest in the Church, but was rarely cultivated by anyone. While cruelties which sicken the nineteenth-century reader were permitted and even countenanced by educated men and women.

As to the religious outlook it was the most gloomy of all. The Church taught the doctrine of passive obedience, and truckled miserably to the Court. Brave and out-spoken Churchmen, who would not wink at wickedness even in high places, had sooner or later to seek safety in exile; while others, who would fain have followed in the steps of Christ, were thwarted on every side, and from the smallness of their numbers proved nearly powerless. The Latitudinarians—the followers of Jeremy Taylor—in vain strove to show that a good life was to be desired even more than an orthodox belief, that a broad-hearted toleration could alone bring about Christian unity. They were unable to stem the current of fierce, selfish intolerance, of

Pharisaical self-contentment, of blind indifference to the sufferings of others.

The country was drenched with the blood of Roman Catholics, barbarously murdered merely for their opinions. The prisons were crammed with nonconformists, eight thousand of whom died of the hardships they there met with in the miserable time which elapsed between the Restoration and the Revolution. Worst of all there sprang up a gross, heartless, selfish materialism, an Atheism which, compared with the Secularism of modern times, was as the prodigal wallowing among the swine, to the prodigal struggling laboriously to his Father.

It was the 6th November. All London was in a state of tumult and commotion, bells were ringing, bonfires preparing, crowds assembling in all the chief thoroughfares. Gunpowder Plot Day had this year fallen on a Sunday, and in consequence was to be kept on the succeeding day instead. Rumours had gone abroad that the King dis-

approved of the observance and would fain have stopped it altogether, but no edict had been published, and the rumour only served to stimulate the zeal of the citizens who had not as yet recovered from the panic caused by the Popish Plot.

The vast majority of the nation still believed in the reality of Oates' revelations, and in any case this was certainly the very last time to neglect the National Thanksgiving Day. The 'prentices donned their best clothes, and sallied forth on merry-making intent; the housewives prepared candles stuck in clay to be set out at nightfall on the window sills; and the Temple students with scarcely an exception turned out into Fleet Street to take their part in the night's proceedings.

At one of the chambers in King's Bench Walk, however, Hugo sat buried in his books, not feeling at all inclined to stir for any recollections of Guy Fawkes, and the nation's memorable deliverance. Randolph was out, and was not likely to return that

night; he had the premises to himself, and was blissfully enjoying the peaceful quiet, and the undivided possession of the lamp, the table, and the sea-coal fire, when the door was opened. He looked up quickly, not feeling at all inclined to welcome a visitor, but only Jeremiah stood there, the old servant who had been in the family more than twenty years, and who had done everything for Hugo since the Great Plague year, when father, mother, nurse, indeed all the household save the two brothers and the old servant, had been swept away in less than a week.

Jeremiah was a strongly built, hard-featured man, and at first sight would have seemed to a casual observer the very last man to accept the post of general caretaker to a delicate child of three years old, just recovering from an attack of the deadly malady. He had proved, however, the most faithful and the most devoted attendant. It was to Jeremiah that the boy had invariably turned for comfort when Ran-

dolph, for some childish fault or misadventure, had mercilessly thrashed him. It was to the old man's stimulating stories about the civil war that he owed a vast admiration for all deeds of courage and endurance, deeds that were naturally but little in accord with his quiet and over-bookish tendencies. Jeremiah was one of the old Cromwellian soldiers, and had fought at Marston Moor and at many other bloody encounters. Disbanded at the Restoration, the Ironsides had quietly retired into various trades and services, and Jeremiah had faithfully served the house of Wharnccliffe, and had proved the best influence in Hugo's life.

'Still at thy books, lad?' he said, in a tone of disapproval. 'Thou'lt never be a man of action, if thou'rt ever reading.'

'We can't all be men of action, Jerry,' said Hugo, resigning himself to the interruption, with his usual sweetness of temper. 'Nature didn't mean us all for Ironsides, and you well know that you will never

turn me into one. Draw your chair up and fetch your pipe, 'tis mighty pleasant by the fire, and I'll warrant your den is as cold as charity. Randolph will not be back to-night.'

The old servant drew one of the heavy oaken chairs to the hearth, shaking his head however, in a meaning way over Hugo's last words.

' 'Twould break my heart, lad,' he said, after a pause, 'wert thou to take to such doings.'

'Would it?' said Hugo, smiling a little. 'Whata staunch old Puritan you are, Jerry! Well, I must try not to break your heart then.'

'Broad is the road to destruction, and many there be that walk along it,' said Jeremiah, shaking his head.

'Come now, Jerry, don't begin a second book of Lamentations, for in truth one is quite enough.'

'Broad is the road, and with your guardian leading the way I fear me thou'lt follow.'

‘Now look here, Jerry!’ Hugo started to his feet, and a glow of colour overspread his usually pale face. ‘There’s just one thing that I’ll never stand from you. Say what you like against me, but as to my brother please to hold your tongue. I’ll not hear one word against Randolph. Do you think that in all London you would find a master whose life would fit in with your rigid notions?’

‘Belike not,’ said the old servant, sententially.

There was a silence. Hugo speedily repented of his momentary anger.

‘I have vexed you. I am sorry,’ he said. ‘’Twas a graceless speech from one whom you had tutored. But an you love me, Jerry, speak no more of the duchess and my brother. As for me—I think you may trust me that I’ll not break your heart in the fashion you speak of—I would sooner break my own any day.’

Jerry’s stern face relaxed, but what he would have said in reply remained for ever

unknown, for as he was about to speak there was a knock at the outer door, which he hastened to open.

A rush of cold air from the staircase, and a loud cheerful voice saluting the old soldier, then a vision of many coloured raiment, and Denham's merry face.

'You old hermit!' he exclaimed. 'I might have known I should find you up to the eyes in books. What, man! have you forgot that 'tis Gunpowder Plot day, and the duty of all good Protestants is to be abroad anathematizing Pope and Devil.'

'They'll do it well enough without my aid!' said Hugo, yawning. 'And of all things I hate a street uproar.'

'Bookworm! 'tis the best possible thing for you. Come, own that you've not stirred abroad this day.'

'Not once only but twice,' said Hugo, smiling.

'Ah, I can guess the length of your tether though. From King's Bench Walk

to Pump Court, there to pore over your lessons like the good boy, then later on perhaps as far even as the "Devil," to hear the news.'

'As far as the "Grecian,"' corrected Hugo.

'Marvellous!' exclaimed Denham. 'Do you hear, Jerry, your young master has actually walked nearly to Temple Bar and back. Come now, Jerry, you back me up, and tell him he ought to sally forth this fine evening.'

'In truth, sir, I was but now telling him he would never be a man of action, if he did nought but read, read from morn till night.'

Hugo groaned, and tossed away his books.

'There's a conspiracy between you,' he said, laughing. 'And when you know I fought a duel on the 5th of last month, I think it's hard you won't leave me in peace beyond the 6th of this!'

So saying he took up his sword, leisurely

proceeding to fasten his baldrick, while Jeremiah fetched his hat and cloak from the next room.

‘ ’Twill do thee good, lad, ’twill do thee good,’ said the old man, as he opened the outer door for the two to pass out, speaking much as a nurse might speak while offering medicine to a reluctant child.

Passing from the quiet purlieus of the Temple into Fleet Street was that night like passing from a peaceful paradise into a pandemonium. To stir was almost impossible so dense was the crowd, and had it not been that a certain weird beauty in the scene touched Hugo’s ready imagination, he would speedily have retreated again, to avoid the pushing and jostling which to one of his temperament was singularly distasteful.

But there was undoubtedly a subtle fascination in the dark mass of spectators and pleasure-makers, in the lurid glare of the bonfire already kindled over against the

Inner Temple Gate, in the gleaming candles set out in all the windows, and in the flaring links which were borne hither and thither among the crowd. Laughter echoed here and there, amid the roar of many voices; oaths, jests, questions, and sober talk, all mingled in one general medley, and all more or less overpowered by the ever-recurring chorus shouted forth with untiring energy by everyone possessed of zeal and good lungs.

‘Remember, remember the fifth of November,
Gunpowder treason and plot.

I see no reason why gunpowder treason
Should ever be forgot.

Holloa, boys! Holloa, boys! Make the bells ring,
Holloa, boys! Holloa, boys! God save the King!’

And in truth the bells did ring with right good will, well-nigh deafening everyone, till the signal was given that the procession was drawing near, and then the noise of the multitude became slightly subdued; it was just possible to hear the trumpets and drums which formed part of the ceremony.

Denham and Hugo, who were standing close to Temple Bar, had the benefit of a close and prolonged inspection of the long procession, for on the eastern side a halt was ordered, while before the statue of 'Good Queen Bess' one of the gorgeously arrayed performers sang a patriotic song, extolling the memory of the good Queen, the Protestant religion, and the Reformation, denouncing all 'Popish knaves,' lamenting the unfortunate Sir Edmondsbury Godfrey, and warning all good citizens to shun the Pope and his boon companion. In the meantime, surrounded by hundreds of torch-bearers, heralded by minstrels and trumpeters, the poor old Pope in a most life-like effigy sat aloft in his chair of state, covered with scarlet, richly adorned with gold fringe and embroidery. On his shoulder sat a dwarf who had consented to play the *rôle* of 'Devil,' and who certainly looked most diabolical as he climbed hither and thither whispering evil counsel in the ears of the

effigy first on one side, then on the other. Immediately behind the Pope there followed a bier on which was laid an effigy of the magistrate who had been murdered immediately after receiving Oates' first revelation of the so-called Popish Plot.

'Poor Sir Edmondsbury!' said Hugo, unable to help smiling a little. 'I should have thought that by this time they had used him often enough at these shows. Why can't they let the poor man rest in peace?'

'He has but been dead a matter of four years!' said Denham, laughing. 'And you may be sure that Shaftesbury has no intention of laying aside his best puppet yet awhile. Hark, how the people groan even now! Never was such a murder as that for stirring up the populace.'

'I thought Shaftesbury had lost his last chance,' said Hugo. 'Does anyone know where he has taken himself to?'

'Some say that he is in Holland, others that he is hiding in the city, and devising mischief in his heart. But no one doubts

that he has yet a finger in the pie. Depend upon it he and his have pulled the strings which make these puppets dance to-night. A notable Protestant is my Lord Shaftesbury !'

By this time the procession was moving, and the Pope, the Devil, Sir Edmondsbury Godfrey, the minstrels, the trumpeters, the drummers, the torch-bearers, followed by a disorderly rabble, passed on again. Denham and Hugo were borne on by the crowd whether they would or not, and were just in time to see the Devil leap lightly from the shoulder of his Holiness as the huge effigy was snatched down from its lofty throne, and hurled into the midst of the bonfire. Then there rose a chorus of joyful acclamation, storms of cheering and huzaing, while the dwarf in the character of his Satanic majesty danced a hornpipe round the bonfire, jeering at the sufferings of his vanquished servant, who crackled gruesomely in the flames.

After this there ensued a regular Saturnalia, the result of which was that many found themselves in prison that night, and that strict orders were immediately issued by the King that the 17th of the month, Queen Elizabeth's birthday, was not to be observed at all.

'By the bye,' said Denham, as they struggled along through the riotous crowd, 'I was to ask you to sup with us; my father says you have deserted us of late. To-night Colonel Sydney will be with him, and he would fain have you two meet.'

Hugo smiled. It amused him somehow to think that Sir William Denham should think him worth introducing to anyone, least of all to such a man as Colonel Sydney.

'I have heard Colonel Sydney's praises sung by Jeremiah ever since I can remember,' he said. 'At least I suppose you mean him that was son to the late Lord Leicester.'

‘Ay, he’s the man. My father is wondrous pleased with him. In politics of course they are poles apart, but my father is too much of a scientific hermit to care a rush for that. For my part I can see naught in Colonel Sydney more than other folk, save that he is mighty stern. My father says that both you and he are anachronisms, and therefore he would have you meet.’

‘How anachronisms?’ said Hugo, laughing.

‘He has an idea that you should rightly have been born two or three hundred years hence. That in fact you are both of you too far ahead of your surroundings to live comfortably in this wicked world.’

Hugo smiled and disclaimed any wish to postpone his life for so long a period. With all its faults and imperfections he clung to his own time, and would not have exchanged it for any dim advanced future had it been in his power to do so. For in

truth when brought face to face with the question few people, even if they are miserable, would exchange their own individuality, and still fewer would accept that magic potion which would enable the partaker to wake up in a different century, even though their own century be chiefly distinguished by wickedness. Universal is the feeling that we would

‘rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of.’

Sir William Denham's house was in Norfolk Street, and the two friends, having at length pushed through the dense crowd by St. Clement Danes, and struggled along the Strand, were not sorry to find themselves in smooth waters again. The distant roar of the multitude was to be heard even in the house, but it only served to accentuate the quiet within. This house was Hugo's ideal of comfort, and was indeed almost the only home he knew. The Denhams were

all fond of him, and fortunately Randolph approved of the friendship, only objecting a little when he thought Sir William was endeavouring to turn Hugo into a man of science rather than a man of the world.

The withdrawing-room looked very pleasant that cold November evening, and made a very pleasant picture as they came in out of the murky darkness of Norfolk Street. The polished floor, the many coloured eastern curtains, the Japanese cabinets, the comfortable fire of logs, beside which sat Lady Denham, with her sweet placid face and snowy curls. The little spaniel on the hearthrug sprang up and barked at them, and was called to order by Mary Denham, Sir William's niece and ward, who sat, embroidery in hand, close to her aunt. On the other side of the hearth Sir William, with his kindly wrinkled old face, was talking eagerly to a stranger who sat in the great arm-chair.

Hugo knew that this must be Colonel

Algernon Sydney, the anachronism, and he looked at him searchingly. He saw a man of about sixty, in a brown doublet with silver facings and cords, a plain white cravat tied with two small tassels but not boasting the smallest piece of lace, and a dark brown periwig, not so long as those which had more recently come into fashion. These lesser details came to his notice in the first glance, afterwards they sank into utter insignificance, he could see nothing but the face—the strangely fascinating face which from that day forth was to become to him what no other face on earth could ever be. In expression it was sad and somewhat stern, particularly in profile, when the strongly marked Roman features stood out in relief. The forehead was broad and high, and slightly receding, the whole face thin and long, with high cheek bones and a prominent and rather pointed chin. He wore a slight moustache, and there was something in the pose of his lips which betokened an impatient temper that

would not easily brook contradiction. This was, however, to some extent contradicted by his eyes, which were large, keen, and thoughtful, dark in colour, and in shape singularly beautiful.

He raised his curved eyebrows a little as Denham and his friend approached, an involuntary sign of surprise escaping him as he looked at Hugo. Indeed, so beautiful and so strange in expression was the boy's face, that very few could have avoided such a gesture.

'Allow me to introduce to you our friend Mr. Wharncliffe,' said Sir William, when the ladies had been saluted. 'Hugo—Colonel Sydney.'

Hugo bowed low.

'Your name is familiar to me,' said Sydney. 'Though how I know not. Do you not come of a Suffolk family?'

'We are distantly related to the Suffolk Wharncliffes, sir,' replied Hugo, and something in his manner showed Sydney that he had touched upon an embarrassing subject.

'T was a Suffolk Wharncliffe that caused him his first duel,' said Rupert, laughing.

'Ay, ay,' said Sir William. 'I've been hearing about that, Hugo. Now I should have thought you were one of the few of his majesty's subjects who might be trusted to obey the edict of '79.'

'The duel was not of my seeking, sir,' said Hugo, colouring.

'No, no,' said Sir William, smiling. 'We have heard the rights of the story from Rupert here; you did well, lad, very well, and Sir Peregrine deserved all you gave him. How fares it with him now, have you heard of him?'

'Randolph heard, this day was a se'nnight, and he was then walking again. I'm glad 't was no worse.'

'You were less lucky than I was in my only challenge,' said Sydney, who had been keenly watching the lad while he spoke. 'Twas over in Holland, and our seconds managed to patch up a peace on honour-

able terms. A barbarous custom is the duel, but Royal edicts will not put an end to it.'

'Do you think, sir, that it will ever be stopped?' asked Hugo.

'For certain,' said Sydney. 'Not by the influence of his majesty, but by the slow development of civilisation. As yet, you see, we are half barbarians, and sadly wanting in common-sense.'

'When folks in general learn something of science,' said Sir William, who never lost an opportunity of referring to his hobby.

'When every Englishman has grasped the thought that he owes something to his country,' said Sydney. 'When human life is rightfully valued, because human rights have been boldly claimed, and human duties realised.'

'But how will claiming of rights touch the matter?' asked Hugo, instinctively turning to Sydney as though he were some oracle.

‘In this way,’ said Sydney. ‘A nation grows great just in proportion as the people making up the nation grow wise enough to do their duty, and bold enough to claim their rights. Take as example any given case, and perchance you’ll see better what I mean. If Lady Denham and her niece will pardon us, and since they are exceptions to the rule I think they will, we will take the position at present given to women. Women are but treated as the toys of men, treated as though they were fit only to satisfy the senses, and maintain our species. How great an ignorance is this! Who doth not know that every age hath produced some women very excellent in those things for which men most prize themselves? And yet men despise them.’ *

‘And is this for want of claiming of rights?’ said Hugo.

‘It is so in great measure. Women have not claimed those helps from study

* See Algernon Sydney’s ‘Essay on Love.’

and education which are freely given to men, but in the natural powers of the mind they are noways inferior. Indeed, the well-composedness of a woman's judgment often moves one to envy. In my opinion to whatsoever they apply themselves, either learning, business, domestic or public government, they show themselves at least equal to our sex. But naught can be done till in the slow development of the ages they awake to a sense of their duties and of their rights ; and until men grow purer and women more cultivated there is but a sorry out-look for this country of ours.'

Hugo was silent, musing over the very novel ideas which had been presented to him. The doctrine of claiming of rights, was little in accord with his character or his education, while as to perceiving of duties, it had been dinned into him from his very childhood that the whole duty of man was passive obedience.

Supper was just then announced, and

they went down below to the parlour.

‘But were we all to learn languages and science, and all things that make up a good education,’ said Mary Denham, ‘who would order the house, and make the preserves, and oversee the linen?’

‘And amuse the men,’ interposed Rupert.

Sydney smiled.

‘There must ever be much in either sex that the other sex cannot perform,’ he said. ‘We would not if we could turn women into she-men; all that the wise would claim is that woman be no longer treated as a toy, as an inferior, and that man no longer ape a superiority which exists merely in his own conceit. As to the linen and the preserves, why, Sir Thomas More found his chiefest comfort in a daughter who was a prodigy of learning, and I’ll warrant Mr. Roper did not find his household ill-governed.’

‘In truth,’ said Lady Denham, ‘many a maid would be glad enough to learn more

in these days, but, you see, the men like it not.'

Sydney laughed.

'Ay, truly they like it not, because they fear their boasted superiority would quickly be ended. Be advised by me, Mistress Mary, study science with your uncle, and lose not your chances of learning for the sake of a few gibes from Whitehall idlers.'

'Defending the cause of women, Colonel Sydney, you are not caring for your own wants,' said Lady Denham. 'Let me give you some of this red-deer pie.'

'Of my own making,' said Mary, with a little mischievous gleam in her eyes. She was a brunette with bright dark eyes, a rich glowing complexion and brown hair curled all over her head after the fashion of the period. Her face was sweet, pure, and slightly proud. Hugo admired her greatly. For the last two years there had existed between them a sort of Platonic

friendship, an admirable thing no doubt for Hugo, but for the girl a somewhat doubtful experiment. She seemed, however, so much older than Hugo, though they were in truth of the same age, that no one dreamed that her friendship could possibly develop into love, and her aunt was only too glad to have Hugo as much as possible about the house, because she knew well enough that he was almost the only steady companion whom Rupert cared for.

Mary knew what no one else in the world knew—at least in Hugo's world—that he had warned the conventiclers. She had heard the whole story of his hurried run from the church to the barn, of how he had met Randolph afterwards in the churchyard just as the service was over, and had escaped without so much as a question, and of how from that day to this no allusion whatever had been made to the heretical kinsfolk down in Suffolk. She had heard more about the duel than any-

one else, and she had elicited a little—a very little—information about Joyce. She had a restless longing to learn more about this rescued maiden, and this evening, as they went upstairs again after supper, she hazarded a question.

‘Did Sir Peregrine say naught of fair Mistress Wharncliffe?’ she asked, with a smile. ‘Methinks he should at least have mentioned the cause of all the strife.’

Hugo was taken by surprise, and to say the truth had been at that very moment wondering what Joyce would think of Colonel Algernon Sydney’s notions as to women. He started and coloured.

‘I saw not the letter,’ he replied, hurriedly. ‘What he may have said of her I know not, but I trust it was not much. I would not have so much as her name fall from his vile pen as it could be helped.’

Never had she seen Hugo so visibly discomposed; with a little sigh she wondered whether he would mind at all what this Suffolk squire might happen to write about.

her. It did not at all trouble him apparently that she should be persecuted by the attentions of men quite as bad doubtless, though not so unmannerly, as Sir Peregrine Blake. Her thoughts wandered back to Rupert's description of the rescued maiden—'devilish pretty, with blue eyes'—she wished with all her heart that her own eyes were not so hopelessly and irretrievably brown.

'Come, Hugo,' said Sir William. 'You must not cheat us of a song. I hear you have a manuscript one by Mr. Purcell. What do you think, Sydney, of our young composer?'

'He seems to be nearer to the mark of the Italian musicians than any English song-writer,' said Sydney. 'I hear he is organist at Westminster Abbey. Is that so?'

'Ay, 't is true,' said Sir William. 'The King also appointed him last July to the Chapel Royal. He is a fine player and worth your hearing.'

‘Maybe,’ said Sydney. ‘But I do not affect public worship, least of all in one of the Chapels-Royal. Mr. Wharnccliffe will doubtless render his music well. He has the face of a musician.’

‘Ay, indeed,’ said Sir William, lowering his voice. ‘When a trifle older I doubt not he will have the best tenor in all London. Mary, do you accompany him on the spinet, it goes better so than with his lute.’

Rupert was lighting the candles, and Mary had already seated herself at the spinet which stood at the far end of the room. Soon the first bars of an exquisite air rang out into the silence, and then a voice marvellously clear and sweet sang Purcell’s new song. Never before had Mary Denham been so well satisfied with the power and expression which Hugo threw into the music; in former times she had been wont to scold him for the want of life and animation in his singing, to-night she felt instead a curious pain at her heart, as she listened

to the wild words and impassioned music.

‘ I attempt from love’s sickness to fly in vain,
Since I am, myself, my own fever and pain.
No more now, fond heart, with pride should we swell,
Thou canst not raise forces enough to rebel.
I attempt from love’s sickness to fly in vain,
Since I am, myself, my own fever and pain.
‘ For love has more power and less mercy than fate,
To make us seek ruin, and love those that hate.
I attempt from love’s sickness to fly in vain,
Since I am, myself, my own fever and pain.’

There was complete silence among the listeners, Sir William wagged his foot in time to the music, Lady Denham laid aside her embroidery and sat idle, Sydney leant back in the great arm-chair beside the fire, his keen, thoughtful eyes fixed upon the singer, but rather as though he were thinking of the lad himself than of the song. He had taken a strange fancy to Hugo, strange because in almost every point their characters were so diametrically opposite. Sydney unbending and stern, Hugo yielding and sweet-tempered, the elder man worn with the hardships he had lived

through, the younger fresh and unsullied, knowing as yet nothing of life and but little of care. Great differences often prove however, a curious source of attraction, and in this case for the first time in his life Sydney thought to himself—‘Had I had a son I would have had him like that!’

He had, however, neither wife nor child, most of his kinsfolk were alienated from him, and the life he had lived had to a great extent unfitted him for forming many friendships. Old age was not so very far off now, and its advance found him lonely and isolated, with countless foes and but few friends on whom he could thoroughly rely. It was as Sir William had said—he was an anachronism! Like all men who are in advance of their age,—all honest and outspoken men at least,—he had met with much bitter opposition, also he had apparently failed, and that is a hard fate for one of his disposition. He had failed to do much for the country

he loved so passionately, he had failed to leave his mark on his generation, he had failed in winning love, or confidence, or distinction. Watching Hugo he fell to thinking of his own youth—his whole life rose in vision before him.

Good God! What hopes had been his when in his nineteenth year he had first been put in command of a troop of horse! Again what dreams of a grand future for his country had come to him three years later, when, the struggle between King and Parliament having begun in good earnest, he had volunteered his services in the Parliamentary army! How sweet had been the toilsome campaign, the wounds, the hardships illumined ever with the thought of the nation's liberties which must be bought at any price! But victory had come with disappointment stalking at her heels.

Another scene rose before him—the painted chamber at Westminster—a number of men eagerly discussing the fate of

the King—he himself full of dislike to all violence, wishing only that Charles might be deposed and banished by act of Parliament, and in vain urging upon Cromwell and Bradshaw that the King could be tried by no Court, and that no man living could legally be tried by *that* Court. Again he saw the looks of aversion and suspicion on the faces of all present as he pleaded for his bitterest enemy, claimed justice for his country's foe. Again Cromwell's words rang in his ears—‘I tell you we will cut off his head with the crown upon it,’—again he heard his own reply as he quitted the assembly never to return—‘You may take your own course, I cannot stop you; but I will keep myself clean from having any hand in this business.’

The scene changed;—he was at quiet Penshurst walking in the park, and one brought him word of the King's death. Illegal as he deemed the sentence, the doom had seemed to him but just. It was

necessary that Charles should be reminded that by the ancient law of the land an English king receives his right to reign from the will of the people, that he had been 'therein trusted with a limited power to govern by and according to the laws of the land, and not otherwise.' The King had broken his trust, had done his best to ruin the country, had laid upon the nation a yoke which could not be borne—certainly if treason ever merited death it was his treason. But, as civilisation developes, the question must recur again and again: Has any human being the right in any circumstances to take the life of another?

Then he wandered on through the years of disappointment which had followed, recalling Cromwell's patriotic zeal and wonderful power, recalling too the impossibility of working with one who in spite of all his virtues was no Republican but a tyrant. Again he was in the House of Commons, and a man in plain black clothes and grey

stockings was walking passionately to and fro with his hat on, upbraiding the members. He could see once more the sudden entry of the musketeers, the hurried dispersion of the members—hear once more the peremptory command to himself to come down, and on his refusal could feel again the hands of Harrison and Wortley on his shoulders as they pushed him out of his place in the House, and in fact out of public life altogether, for five long years. Once more hopes had arisen, once more he was actively at work, carrying on negotiations with Sweden and Denmark. The Restoration had, however, dashed all his hopes to the ground, and after that there came only a vision of weary years of exile, —wanderings in Germany, Italy, France, homeless, friendless, often wellnigh penniless, in constant danger of assassination, and ever with the knowledge that the country for which he had fought and bled and suffered was going to ruin.

Well, his exile was ended, and he was

by an English hearth again, able to watch the ruin of his country yet more closely.

‘A sweet song! A charming song!’ exclaimed Lady Denham. ‘Let us have one more, Hugo. It is long since we heard you.’

Hugo sang ‘In Woodstock Town,’ and this time Sydney listened to him.

‘I have not heard such singing since I was in Rome,’ he said, at the close. ‘There was at that time a tenor, Geronimo by name, who had a voice much like yours. Do you sing Italian music.’

‘I do at times to the King, it pleases him more than our English music,’ said Hugo.

Sydney’s face darkened. He made no reply, however; and shortly after the servant came to announce that Jeremiah waited below and had brought a message to his master.

Hugo, knowing that the message was probably from his brother, hastened down. In a few minutes he returned to the withdrawing room, evidently not much pleased with the news Jeremiah had brought him.

‘I must bid you good-night,’ he said, approaching Lady Denham. ‘The King commands my presence at Whitehall.’

‘We must see more of one another,’ said Sydney, as he bade him farewell. A speech which made every pulse in Hugo’s body beat at double time, for already Sydney had become his hero of heroes.

‘To think that such as he must go to Whitehall!’ said Sydney, when the door had closed behind him. ‘What are his people about that they permit it.’

‘It is his brother’s doing,’ said Sir William. ‘A strange man is Wharncliffe, one of the Duchess of Cleveland’s devotees. According to Hugò, that is his sole weakness, however. He is a bitter sort of fellow, but somehow the lad is mightily fond of him.’

‘And he of the lad?’

‘I scarcely know,’ said Lady Denham. ‘He is very stern with him, and at times I fancy that he really only cares for him so long as he proves useful.’

CHAPTER VI.

AT WHITEHALL.

I need not be ashamed of your Majesty, praised be Got, so long as your Majesty is an honest man.

King Henry V.

THE great gallery at Whitehall presented that evening its usual aspect of splendour, gaiety, and vice. It was ablaze with candles, and crowded with people, who, in their rich and gay-coloured clothes, made the place look like an immense flower-garden. Gostling, the celebrated bass, was singing a song which no modern audience would tolerate, and Signor Giovanni Baptista Draghi—dubbed for convenience sake ‘John Baptist,’—was accompanying him on the harpsichord. A number of

courtiers were sitting round a table playing at basset, with an immense pile of gold before them. The Queen with two of her ladies sat apart playing her favourite game of *Ombre*. A group of idlers clustered together in one corner to listen to the latest lampoon. The rest talked, jested, flirted, and made merry. The place was very hot, coming indeed from the sharp November air outside it seemed to Hugo stifling, also there was something about the moral atmosphere which always oppressed him. He was never happy at Whitehall, never in harmony with his surroundings. These people lived such a different life, thought such different thoughts, cared for such different things, that it was almost impossible to find anything in common with them, nor did he trouble himself to try much, he was too young, and at present too well-satisfied with a quiet studious 'laissez-aller' kind of life. That he owed any sort of duty to those he met did not occur to him. He went to Whitehall

because it was his brother's wish ; he sang his best, to please Randolph ; he was quiet and courteous, because it was impossible for him to be anything but a perfect gentleman ; and he never, even at home, showed his dislike to the Whitehall evenings, because he was philosophic, and was in the habit of taking things calmly. But the people he met were to him only like the puppets in a show, and puppets of whom he rather wearied. He rarely considered them as actual men and women.

In spite of this he was, strangely enough, already a favourite at the Court. People liked him because he was original, not quite like all the rest of the world, fresh, and unspoilt, and void of the smallest particle of conceit. They amused themselves with seeing how he would take things, how he would dexterously avoid singing some lewd song, even when the King asked for it, how he would adroitly parry the questionable jests of the wits, how above

all he adored his brother, and cared for nothing, so long as he was secure of his approval.

This evening as usual it was not towards the King that he looked with any apprehension. He looked instead at Randolph to see whether he were vexed at his delay. He had it is true made all speed from Sir William Denham's, had rushed into his Court dress in the space of ten minutes, and had hurried to Whitehall as fast as possible. But then there was no knowing how slow Jeremiah might have been in bringing the message, for if there was one place the old servant hated his coming to it was the Court.

Randolph was standing not far from the King among a group of courtiers, idly leaning against the pedestal of a statue, and combing his periwig with a large tortoise-shell comb, a way of killing time which was then much in vogue. He looked as usual handsome, discontented, and *blasé*. Was he vexed? Hugo looked at him

questioningly, and Randolph, who had long been watching for his arrival, met his gaze, scanned him from head to foot, and looked at any rate no more discontented than before. There was not the ominous contraction of the forehead which Hugo hated to cause. He breathed more freely, and advanced towards the King, following the usher. Randolph watched him critically. A tall slim graceful figure in dark blue velvet, laced with gold, a manner devoid entirely of courtier-like subservience and adulation,—a markedly quiet manner, just escaping nonchalance, however, by a sort of inborn dignity.

Charles was seated on a sort of ottoman, lounging between two of his mistresses, on his right hand the beautiful Mrs. Gwynne, and on his left the Duchess of Cleveland, one of the most depraved women of the time. Hugo came as near to hating her as he was capable of hating anybody; he loathed the thought that she held Randolph in bondage, loathed the thought that he

was but one of her innumerable slaves, and if he made light of the matter to old Jeremiah it was not because he thought lightly of it.

‘You are late, Mr. Wharncliffe,’ said Charles, with a good-natured smile, extending his hand which the young Templar knelt to kiss.

‘Sire,’ replied Hugo, ‘I made all speed on receiving your gracious message, but I was absent when it arrived.’

‘Making merry with the rioters in Fleet Street, I’ll be bound!’ said Charles, laughing. ‘Was it not so, eh?’

‘No, my liege, I was at Sir William Denham’s.’

‘What! he that is a member of the Royal Society? I remember him, a learned man, and methinks he has a pretty niece, who is a notable heiress. I have torn him away, you see,’ turning to the Duchess of Cleveland, ‘from much more agreeable society! Was the fair maiden wroth with me?’

‘Your majesty is wholly mistaken,’ said Hugo, colouring.

‘What! can you deny that you were sorry to leave?’ said the king, laughing at his face of embarrassment.

‘There was in truth a guest of whom I would fain have seen more,’ said Hugo, with the transparent honesty which made him so refreshing.

‘Who was that? Let us hear all about her? A blonde or a brunette.’

‘It was no lady, your majesty, it was merely a friend of Sir William Denham’s.’

‘I must know the name of my rival, whose presence was more to be desired than an evening at my court.’

Hugo looked troubled.

‘His name, sire, was Colonel Sydney,’ he replied, after a brief pause.

The King started.

‘Upon my soul! young man,’ he exclaimed, ‘you are very bold to mention that man in my presence.’

‘It was at your majesty’s request,’ said

Hugo, respectfully, but with a sort of grave dignity.

Charles smiled.

‘Tis true, and I like you better for not being an adept at lying yet awhile. After all, there’s something *naïve* in an honest man now-a-days. There! a jest for you, ladies! When does an honest man become a knave? When honesty is so old-fashioned that it has a *naïve* appearance.’

He grew thoughtful for a minute, and the lines in his hard-featured face deepened, while he toyed absently with three spaniel puppies on his knee.

‘And so you would fain have seen more of Colonel Sydney?’ he said, looking curiously at the young Templar.

‘Yes, your majesty,’ replied Hugo, lifting his quiet grey eyes to the King’s.

‘And why, pray?’

‘He seemed to me a man of great power, a very noble man, my liege.’

‘Are you aware that he is one of the most dangerous men in the country?’

That he rebelled against the blessed martyr? That he would fain establish a gloomy Republic in this merry England of ours?’

‘Sire,’ said Hugo, rendered uneasy by the consciousness that Randolph was listening disapprovingly to every word he uttered, yet sturdily determined that nothing should make him false to Sydney. ‘Sire, I know very little of such matters, but one thing I cannot doubt, and that is that be his views what they may, Colonel Sydney is a noble gentleman.’

‘There is not another man in all England who would have the courage to tell me that to my face,’ said Charles, musing. ‘Well, lad, I would have you be truer to me than Colonel Sydney has been, for i’ faith I have but few followers so brave and outspoken. But enough of this,—go sing me one of your songs.’

Hugo obeyed, feeling thankful enough to have the conversation ended. It is not the easiest thing in the world to speak out

bravely in defence of an unpopular person, and to incur Randolph's displeasure was always keenly painful to Hugo. With a very heavy heart, which could in no wise be elated by the King's compliment, he crossed over to the harpsichord, and handed his song to Signor 'John Baptist,' who was to accompany him. The same song which but an hour ago he had sung at the Denhams' house, to how different an assembly! He sang several times and was warmly applauded. After his last song he looked round apprehensively for his brother, but Randolph had disappeared and the King, too, was nowhere to be seen.

Could he have looked into the adjoining chamber, where Charles was in the habit of receiving those who desired private interviews, he would have seen his Sovereign and his guardian deep in conversation, laying a scheme which was to cost him dear.

'You say the lad is absolutely obedient, that you could trust him with anything?'

'Absolutely, your majesty. I have train-

ed him to be of use, and to serve my ends. He will not question aught that I bid him do.'

'Then, if that is so, it were no bad plan that he should learn to know this traitor; I hear he has great influence with young men. Let him get hand and glove with him, trusted with his secrets and so forth, and then when the right time comes do you make him reveal all to yourself. You think you can do this?'

'I am certain of it, my liege.'

'You are very much more confident than I am,' said the King, thoughtfully. 'He seemed to me just now by no means so docile and yielding as you deem him.'

'Your majesty will pardon his awkwardness, that was but his lack of court training.'

'In dishonesty,' said the King, with a sarcastic smile.

'Moreover,' continued Randolph, stung by this remark, 'it is possible, if your majesty will pardon my saying such a

thing, that he would reveal to myself what he would not reveal to your majesty.'

'Which in plain English means that you are the greater bully. Well, I willingly concede you the palm!'

He laughed: Randolph smiled a mechanical court smile.

'Of course it rests with you, my liege. If it will further your ends, I will gladly let the boy associate with Colonel Sydney; all we desire is to be of service to your majesty.'

'Then be it so,' said the King. 'Let us lay this attractive net for my enemy.'

'They returned to the gallery; the King looked a little regretfully at Hugo, who was to be made an unconscious tool, and used for work which he would abhor. But in another minute he had forgotten all about the matter, and was jesting with the beautiful and witty Duchess of Mazarine, who was at that time high in his favour.

Randolph, after a moment's considera-

tion, made his way to the place where Hugo was standing, apparently listening to Gostling's song, but in reality absorbed in his own thoughts.

'Take a turn with me,' said Randolph, 'I have a word to say to you.'

Under cover of the music, and the general roar of conversation, which was not much abated even by the singing of the celebrated bass, the two brothers paced the gallery, practically as much in private as in their own chambers.

'You managed well just now,' began Randolph. 'I feared that you would ruin your reputation with the King, but luckily for you he took all in good part.'

Hugo was much relieved, he had expected something very different from Randolph.

His brother continued.

'You have done very well indeed, I felt proud of you. Honesty is at times the

best policy, there is no question of that. But just one word of caution. I don't object to your following up the acquaintance which you have made to-night at the Denhams', only mention not that unpopular name more than need be. You only harm both yourself and him by bringing his name into notice. Do you understand?'

'Ay,' said Hugo. 'I will be careful. And you do not indeed object to my meeting him again? He said he must see more of me, and I would fain know him better, for indeed, sir, he is a great man, the greatest man I ever met.'

Randolph smiled good-naturedly.

'Well, well, have a care. Sing his praises to me as much as you will, but to the world without hold your tongue. I doubt not he is an able man, he has travelled much, and knows the world.'

'Who is that beautiful girl standing near the harpsichord?' asked Hugo, diverted from all thoughts of Sydney, by a

face which somehow reminded him of Joyce.

‘Her in rose-coloured satin, mean you ? That is the little Duchess of Grafton, Lord Arlington’s daughter.’

‘What, is she married already ?’

‘Ay, she was married at five years old, and re-married at twelve to one of his Majesty’s sons. I’ll get her mother-in-law to introduce you to her.’

Hugo could not make any objection, though it seemed to him a sort of sacrilege to owe an introduction to such a girl to the favour of such a woman.

‘They will just suit each other,’ said the Duchess of Cleveland, when Randolph had preferred his request. ‘The two court innocents ! I marvel they had not become acquainted long since. My love,’ turning to the young girl who was standing close by her, and had already coloured deeply at the disagreeable bantering tone. ‘My love, let me introduce you to Mr. Hugo Wharncliffe, a paragon of virtue, I assure you.’

The girl curtseyed, Hugo bowed low; they were both of them too young not to be a good deal discomposed by this uncomfortable introduction, Hugo almost fancied he saw tears in the eyes of the little duchess, and this made him quickly recover his equanimity that he might come to her rescue.

‘Signor John Baptist is a skilful player, is he not?’ he remarked. ‘I had not heard him before this evening.’

She looked grateful to him for promptly starting so easy a topic.

‘In truth,’ she said, glancing round to see that her mother-in-law was safely out of hearing, ‘the music is the sole thing that makes this place tolerable. I love not Whitehall, and you, methinks, agree with me in that disloyal sentiment.’

She smiled, with a mixture of humour and pathos which enchanted him.

‘And yet,’ said Hugo, meditatively, ‘’twould scarcely do to live only among one’s books. I should have lost much

indeed this night had not my friend Denham ruthlessly carried me off.'

'Is that a kinsman of Mistress Mary Denham?'

'It is her cousin.'

'I know Mistress Mary Denham well, and methinks I have heard her mention you. Are you not he who found for Sir William Denham that rare plant of which he wanted a specimen?'

'We chanced upon it in Suffolk, a few weeks since,' said Hugo, 'returning from the Newmarket races. But indeed it is as much due to Rupert Denham as to me, for he found it a second time when I had lost it.'

The little duchess looked at him with a pleased look. She had heard the whole story, and knew that the plant had been lost because the elder brother had snatched it away in a passion and thrown it into a wayside copse. She liked him greatly for keeping silence about that part of the matter.

‘Mr. Evelyn told me once that the King has in his library a curious book on botany with rare coloured plates. Would you care to see it?’

‘I should like it greatly, if it were possible,’ said Hugo. ‘But I could not ask any favour of the King to-night.’

‘But I will ask; it will give him pleasure, for he is always pleased to see his subjects lovers of science. See! he is at liberty now, I will ask his permission.’

She walked gracefully towards the King and made her request, to which he at once acceded, but as usual could not forbear making one of his jests.

‘Go, by all means; one of the ushers will show you the way. And we won’t say anything of a duenna, since he is such a handsome spark. Odds fish! she blushes like a carnation! art in love with the young scape-grace already, I’ll be bound.’

But the prudent little duchess had learnt enough of the world to take very good care that a staid old court lady

accompanied them when they left the gallery, with the usher in advance to pilot them through the maze of rooms and passages. The man bore a lamp which dimly revealed to them the costly furniture and the rich hangings of the rooms through which they passed. It was not, however, till an exclamation escaped Hugo that they paused in their onward way.

‘Oh,’ he cried. ‘Bring the light nearer, sir, an you will. What is this beautiful picture?’

They were in a room which was filled with all kinds of curious clocks, watches, and pendules, Charles being fond of all clever mechanism; there were also several beautiful pictures, and Hugo had paused before one representing the appearance of our Lord after his Resurrection to Mary Magdalene.

‘Tis the “*Noli me tangere*” of Hans Holbein,’ said the usher, ‘and worth any money, they say.’

He went on talking and criticising, but

luckily addressed all his remarks to the duenna; as for Hugo and the little duchess they could neither of them have spoken, for the unspeakable reverence, the sort of heavenly astonishment expressed in the picture seemed to have taken possession of them. In that silence somehow they learnt to know each other; they had begun, though they did not know it, a life-long friendship.

‘This is the library,’ said the usher, flinging open a door close by.

They entered, and found what for that age was a large collection of books, numbering perhaps a thousand volumes. Some of them were richly bound, and embossed with gold, but the particular book which they had come to see was in manuscript, a great quarto over three hundred years old and written in French. The plants were most curiously painted in miniature, and Hugo was delighted to have an opportunity of going through them, while the little duchess, though only fifteen, displayed

so much intelligence, and such an eagerness to learn from him all that he could tell her, that she doubled his pleasure.

‘You must come and see me,’ she said to him, when they parted, ‘at my father’s house. Then some day you must be introduced to Mr. Evelyn, who often comes there. He would like to know you, I feel sure, and I ever long for all whom I like to know him, for he is so learned and so good.’

Thus ended what had proved for Hugo an eventful evening.

CHAPTER VII.

JOYCE'S JOURNAL.

Sometimes hath the brightest day a cloud ;
 And after summer evermore succeeds
 Barren winter, with its wrathful nipping cold ;
 So cares and joys abound as seasons fleet.

SHAKSPERE.

I, JOYCE WHARNCLIFFE, have determined for three reasons to write down from time to time what I can remember of our life at Mondisfield. The first of these reasons is that things are really beginning to happen so fast,—and we never believed till now that anything would happen, only that each day would go on much like the one before, with Sundays to keep us from getting too monotonous. The second

reason is that, since the fifth of October, when the duel was fought outside the park, Evelyn and I have felt dull somehow, and as if just the first seeing of that bad man, and the seeing of how our brave 'knight' fought with him, had made it quite impossible for us to go back to our old ways, fancying stories, and acting people's lives in our own. Somehow, things got real to us on that Saturday afternoon, and then the Sunday following, when the congregation had to disperse all in haste, and when we were in terror lest our dear father should be arrested, that made life seem still more real.

It puzzles me a little that, though it has at last begun to feel so very real to me, yet I do not like a bit better to be what Elizabeth calls 'useful in the house.' The books will seem still to me realer than the puddings, and the preserves, and the dairy-work, and the needle-work. I said so to Elizabeth to-day, but dear Betty, though she is so wise, does not seem to

understand at all what books do for one. She came to me in the north parlour, and said,

‘Oh, Joyce, I wish you wouldn’t idle away your time with vain poems and plays.’

I was reading Shakspeare’s story of ‘Romeo and Juliet.’ It was a pity it was not one of his historical plays, because that would have been easier to argue from, and certainly it did seem, perhaps, a little wasting time to be reading a love-tale. I read it because it seemed to me that Romeo might have been like our knight—he did fight two duels, and he was young, and brave, and handsome.

‘But,’ I said to Betty, ‘it gives one so many thoughts to read books, and that makes one happy. Whereas, to make puddings and preserves gives one no thoughts at all.’

‘No thoughts!’ cried Betty. ‘No thoughts in making a pudding. Why, you have to keep thinking all the time.’

‘You have to keep worrying, “Have

I put enough sugar? Is there too much dough? Will it be heavy? How long must it boil?"' I said, laughing. 'But I don't call that thinking.'

'I call it thinking to some purpose,' said Betty, with that vexed look which she always has when I say what she thinks unpractical things. 'Who is the better for your reading of books, and your thinking of thoughts that have nothing to do with the house, or with anything that is of use?'

I was silenced by that. For, when one comes to think of it, who is the better for it because I read Mr. Milton's 'Paradise Lost,' or 'Romeo and Juliet,' or 'The Tempest,' or even graver books?

'What have you to show for this whole hour that you have been reading?' she went on. 'Whereas, if you had been busy in the kitchen, you might have had a pile of manchets ready for the morrow, or you might have made girdle-cakes for every-one's supper.'

I only felt that I *had* got something from the reading, but whether it was a thing which could be shown definitely, like a manchet or a girdle-cake, I was doubtful. Yet it was to me, after all, more real than either.

‘It makes the world feel bigger when one reads,’ I said at last. ‘It makes you see how little you know, and what a great number of things there are to know. And, oh! Betty!’—I could have danced with delight at having at length got hold of the right argument—‘your pudding is made, and eaten, and there’s an end of it; but the book is read, and stays always, and makes one happy, and teaches one things, and there’s never any end to it.’

‘It is selfish,’ said Betty. ‘For you see it is only yourself that is made better, after all. Whereas the pudding would have been for everyone’s dinner, and the manchets for everyone’s breakfast, and the girdle-cakes for everyone’s supper.’

This seemed to me unanswerable. I

felt very unhappy. Could it be wrong to read? If so, why did so many great and good people write books?

Father had been tying up a climbing rose just by the window, and he must have heard what we were saying, for just then he came in.

‘You foolish children!’ he said. ‘One of you talks as if you were all body and no mind, and the other as though you were all mind and no body. Books, Betty, are food for the mind, and it is no more selfish to spend time over reading them than to spend time in eating, sleeping, and walking for the good of your body. Nay, it is quite as wrong, perhaps more wrong, to neglect the feeding of your mind as to neglect the healthful keeping of your body. The stronger and better fed the mind, the more use will it be to other people, sooner or later. As for you, my little Joy,’ he said, putting his hand on my head, ‘you will be a wise maid, and let no day pass without doing something

in the house to help your mother. For, look you, what would come to us all if Betty were to marry? Or how would you order your husband's house, if you knew nought of housewifery?'

I have written this all down, even our silly talk, because I wanted always to remember what my father said. I shall think of it always when I mind being called away to the kitchen, but somehow I don't think I shall mind again.

Would Juliet have managed her husband's house well, I wonder, if her story had not ended so sadly? She was just as old as I am.

I have been a long time coming to my third reason for writing our recollections. The third reason is that a dreadful thought has come to me, or rather was given to me by my father—that perhaps Mondisfield might not long be ours. How I came to hear about it was in this way. The others were all in the orchard at the apple gathering. I was to go too,

but had not quite finished my morning's spinning. The spinning is the house-work I mind doing least. It is not at all sticky and greasy, like the cakes and puddings, and you need not keep worrying about it like other kinds of work; it is a sort of steady going on, just as monotonous as the whirr of the wheel, and I like it because one can think about other things at the same time. Nurse had let me take my spinning-wheel into the musicians' gallery, which has always been my own special part of the house. It is only used by other people once a year, though in old times, they say, the musicians played every evening while the family were at supper, and often there were dances. We do not often dance, father's friends mostly think it wrong. But he likes us to dance by ourselves, and once a year—that is on the twelfth of May, which is his birthday, and Elizabeth's too—we have a great festival day, and real musicians come from St. Edmondsbury, and we have songs, and

country-dances, and a dinner for all the tenants. Some people wonder at father for doing this, but he says that all extremes are bad, and that, perchance, had the Commonwealth been less strict about the amusements, the people would not have been so eager to get back the King and his wicked court. And once I even heard him tell a grave and learned minister that so long as the hundred and fiftieth psalm found place in the Bible, his daughters should enjoy both timbrel and dance in moderation, only he would ever have an eye to the company they mixed with.

Well, I was sitting with my spinning-wheel in the old gallery, when all at once, above the whirr, I heard a sharp sound as of something snapping asunder. Looking across to the other end of the hall, where the sound came from, I saw that the picture of the little boy with the dog, which hangs high up above the north parlour door, and exactly facing my gallery, was falling down. The string had

snapped, and I could do nothing—nothing but just watch it, as it fell to the ground, making a great crash on the white flagstones. When it was down, I ran out of the gallery, through the little room beyond, and down the steep little staircase, then hurried out beyond the screen, and through the hall till I had reached the picture.

Its frame was badly broken, and in many places the gold had chipped off, but the portrait itself was not hurt. I looked at it curiously, for it was too small a picture to be seen very well at a distance, and my idea of the little boy had been always somewhat vague. I do not know why, but as a little girl I well remember having a strange terror of this picture. It always seemed to be looking at me, and on dusk evenings in summer, or, worse still, on dark nights in winter, by the dim lamplight, I used to rush through the hall, on my way to bed, absolutely trembling at the thought of those eyes which would

follow me. That, of course, was long ago. I almost laughed at the thought now, for on a nearer and soberer view it was such a harmless sort of picture. A little, innocent, dark-eyed babe of two or three years; in a tight white cap, a long white pinner, and bishop sleeves. In one hand it grasped a rattle, with the other it patted a little spaniel. The whole attitude was stiff and quaint—indeed, it was hard to tell whether he were sitting, or standing, or leaning. Once more I turned the picture over as it had fallen. On the back of the canvas was painted a name in large black characters,

‘Hugo Wharncliffe,’

and down below, written in my father’s writing,—‘This picture was saved from the Great Fire of London, in the year of grace 1666.’

Who was Hugo Wharncliffe? Had we ever had a brother of whom I had never heard? That seemed scarcely possible. As I wondered, my father passed through the

hall, and, seeing that the picture had fallen, came to see how far it was injured.

'Father,' I said, 'who is this boy? Who is Hugo Wharncliffe? Had we ever a brother?'

'Never, my child,' he replied, sadly. 'This is the portrait of a very distant kinsman of yours, brother to him who is heir-at-law, and will at my death take possession of this house.'

My heart almost stopped beating.

'What!' I cried, 'will Mondisfield belong to us no more? I thought it was ours for always.'

My father smiled, and explained to me that, as he had no son, the property went to the next male, one Randolph Wharncliffe.

'But how came you by this picture, then?' I asked.

'That,' said my father, 'is a long story; however, you shall hear it. I loved this lad's mother well; she was a noble lady, and would have brought up her son vir-

tuously had she lived. She died, poor lady, in the plague year; out of the whole household were left but three—Randolph, the eldest, a young man of two-and-twenty, this little lad here, whose portrait was scarce finished, and yet in the artist's hands at the time, and one servant. Being in London in the August of the year following, when the pestilence was somewhat abated, I was one day waited on by the artist, who, hearing that I was head of the Wharncliffe family, called to explain to me how matters were with regard to this picture. It had been ordered, it seems, by the little lad's mother, who was since dead; the brother would not take the picture, or pay anything towards the expense, saying merely he had not ordered it. To argue with him was of no avail, and sooner than have our name dishonoured, I paid the artist myself, and brought the picture to my rooms in the City. That day se'n-night broke out the great fire, and how I escaped with all my goods you have often-

times heard. I wrote it on the back of the canvas, as you see, so that this lad's descendants may prize the picture accordingly as a relic.'

'His descendants!' I exclaimed. 'Oh, father, I ever thought we should live here, and after that our children, not other people's.'

'It cannot be, little Joy. And, after all, why should we look to the future? Set your heart on nothing, child; for indeed it is well if I hold this place through my lifetime. Randolph Wharncliffe, they tell me, hath great influence at Court, and he accounts me his bitterest foe.'

'You, father! How can he make a foe of you?' I said, looking up into his grave, quiet, strong face. How, indeed, could anyone help loving and revering him?

'It is in this way, child,' said my father. 'He is one of the Sussex Wharncliffes, and lost his estates, or rather his father lost his estates, in the time of the civil war. These he has never recovered,

though he would fain have done so at the Restoration. Can you not understand, then, that it is bitter for him to see one of the Suffolk Wharncloffes, who fought against the late king, still peacefully enjoying his property? Could he get rid of me, he would, you see, come into this estate at once. And, Joyce, these are evil times, and I hold unpopular opinions. You must not set your heart, dear child, on a quiet life here.'

I looked at the innocent little babe in the picture, and wondered what this unknown kinsman of mine would be like now.

'Would this cousin be your enemy too?' I asked, after a pause.

'He would certainly hold his brother's views of the matter,' said my father. 'Tis many years since I saw him, but I remember well that he was like the little shadow of his brother, following him everywhere, and obeying him most implicitly. It was most touching, I remember, to notice his devotion to one who treated him but

roughly. Poor lad! he stands a bad chance with such a training.'

'Does he, too, go to the court?' I asked.

'I should think it very probable,' said my father; and with that he went away, to leave me a new subject for day-dreams. Evelyn and I talked about it almost all the afternoon, while we gathered the apples. Evelyn and I always go together, though she is six years younger, and Robina comes in betwixt us. But Robina, all say, should have been a boy. She is now just fourteen, and as tall as I am, and her wrists much stronger. She loves to be ever out of doors; in the farm-yard among the poultry and the pigs and the cows. And she will spend hours in the warren with the conies, who do not fear her; and the deer in the park will let her stroke them, though, if anyone else draw near, they rush off like the wind. Robina is much more clever than I am, and seems older altogether, and never cares for other people to look after

her, but will ever be independent. She wishes much she had been a boy, chiefly because she would not then have been forced to wear long skirts, which certainly do get in one's way not a little. The only play of Shakspeare's that I can ever make her hearken to is 'Cymbeline,' and she cares not for that till it comes to the part where Imogen dons 'doublet, hat, hose,' and says she is 'almost a man already.' All which Betty thinks mighty improper, but Evelyn and I think we would have done harder things than that to win back our husband's trust, and, anyhow, it seemed better than staying at the court to die of a broken heart.

The day that the picture fell, when we had finished the apple-gathering for that afternoon, some of us shaking the branches, while Nurse stood below to catch the apples, or else all holding a big cloth below, while Hurst climbed into the trees, and dropped them softly down so that they might not be bruised—when all was

done, Evelyn and I stayed, walking up and down the apple-walk, which is quite our favourite part of the garden. To begin with, it is quiet, and people do not come there often, for it lies at the further side of the vegetable-garden, and is walled off from the bowling-green. At the end is the pigeon-cote, with its red-tiled roof and weather-vane, and the dear, soft, blue-grey pigeons flying and whirring about overhead. Then, too, the prettiest part of the moat is just in this place. It takes a great sweeping curve just beyond the pigeon-cote, and on the further bank the fir-trees are closer and taller than elsewhere, and other trees mingle with them; and, indeed, the wood is so thick just there, that we always call it the wilderness. After that great beautiful curve, the moat is straight for a long way—the whole length of the apple walk, which stretches alongside of it, a broad grassy walk, with one side sloping down to the water and shaded by the dear old apple-

trees. Evelyn and I always fancy that the monks must have walked up and down this path. For in old times Mondisfield was a monastery, and had a chapel belonging to it, which was built close to our north parlour. And the abbot of St. Edmondsbury used to be fond of staying here.

It was walking up and down the apple walk that day that we decided to write down what happens. I am to write because my writing is easier to read, but Evelyn will help me to remember things, and we shall do it on rainy days. We do it for the sake of those other children who one day, hundreds of years hence perhaps, will live in our dear old home.

We are a big household. There are father and mother; Betty who is nearly one-and-twenty, and has a dear kind face, and clever hands which can make all things from shirts to sack posset; Damaris, who is tall and rosy, and learns Latin and can

even write poetry, yet is skilful at embroidery too; Frances, who is something like Betty, and who I think has never done one wrong thing all her life, yet is the kindest of all to us when we have done wrong; Joyce, the one who writes this record; Robina, who has been afore described, and dear Evelyn our pet, the youngest of all. Then there is Nurse who has lived with us all our lives, and Kezia the cook, and Tabitha her daughter, my mother's maid, and Dennis the serving-man, and Hurst the gardener, and Melchizedek the coachman, besides the farm labourers who live in the cottages near by. Evelyn says I have not described myself, and that the 'descendants' of the Randolph Wharncliffes will not know what I am like. But of course there is the picture of me in the north parlour, which will perhaps still hang there, that picture which amuses us all so much. It was our grandmother who had it painted when once I stayed with her at St. Edmondsbury,

nearly six years ago. I am sitting in a beautiful landscape in a pale green satin dress (a dress which was never mine at all) and my curls are smoother than they ever could have been, and everything about me most neat and proper, with never a crease or a crumple, while with one hand I caress a meeker lamb than ever lived, with a wreath of flowers round his neck. Our grandmother had the picture painted for her, and when she died it was brought here. Therefore the 'descendants' can certainly need no more description. There is one other person whom I would have liked to describe, and that is mother. I have tried but it is of no use, it all had to be scratched out. Somehow I almost doubt if even Mr. Milton could have described his own mother. There are some things will not go into words, though we try ever so much to make them.

Writing this, in the window-seat of our great nursery, and looking first out of doors at the quiet garden and across the

moat to the broad elm-tree avenue, and again beyond that to the wooded hill in the distance, with all the trees so golden and glorious, I can scarcely believe that troubles can seek us out in this dear quiet home of ours. Within is Nurse, looking through a great basket full of hose—warm woollen hose for winter wear, and Evelyn on her little stool sits reading Mr. Bunyan's story of the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' for the hundredth time, and eating a Perry pippin. Mother has just come in with a bunch of fresh gathered lavender, which we are to make up into bags for the linen-chest, therefore I shall write no more of our recollections at present. Robina and Damaris come in eating apples,—we all eat apples in these autumn days, Robina owns to ten this afternoon! Will the children who will live here in the future live the life we live? Will they wander about in the sunny autumn days, gathering golden pippins, and golden preinettes, and Perry pippins? Will they

too pace to and fro under the dear
old trees in the apple walk? And will
they love Mondisfield as dearly as we love
it now?

CHAPTER VIII.

MARY DENHAM'S COUNSEL.

He that hath love and judgement too
Sees more than any other doo.

MATTHEW ROYDON.

Hugo was naturally one of those who, by virtue of a yielding disposition and an absorption in intellectual pursuits, are somewhat averse to politics. Until he met Algernon Sydney the affairs of the nation had troubled him not at all; he had thought as little about them as anyone in England. But the general interest in political events was growing so keen and strong that it was no longer possible for him to remain indifferent. As usual the events of the times were represented in

the games played by the children. In the days of the disputes between Charles I. and the Parliament, the children had played at 'Cross-purposes.' At the Restoration a new game had been introduced—'I love my love with an A, &c.' At the present time another game had superseded this. The light frivolity of the Restoration days had become overshadowed by the intolerance which made Protestants persecute Romanists, Churchmen persecute Non-conformists, and Tories do all in their power to silence Whigs. Accordingly the children began to travesty the state of things they saw in the world around, and introduced the game of—'Neighbour, I've come to torment you ; do as I do.' This again was in its turn to be replaced in the days of the Revolution, when all sorts and conditions of men were changing places, by 'Puss in the corner.'

As even in their sports the children seemed to be aware of the events which agitated the outer world, so in the quiet of his life

of study Hugo could not fail to be aware of the great national struggle which was going on, nor could he fail to take interest in it. Life seemed to grow bigger to him, and he became growingly conscious, as Joyce over her books had become conscious, that he knew very little, and that there was much to know. It is a wonderful time for all of us when we first begin to take keen interest in matters outside our own small circle, when, having been duly crammed and unduly disgusted with history in our school days, we wake up one happy morning to find that there is a living history which can be daily and hourly studied—a history in which we all have our share, our infinitesimal yet priceless share of influence and responsibility.

The autumn had been to him a very happy one. He was fascinated by Sydney, whom he had now met several times. He was as yet only in that pleasant borderland where, with suspended judgment and ready observation, it is our part to listen and

learn and study and hold our tongues. Happy nineteen! when it is a duty, a positive duty to keep our opinions to ourselves, or when questioned to put them forward with all due modesty and confession of ignorance, not confidently as in later days, when the time for action has come and a man must have the courage of his opinions, and be ready if need be to pain his dearest friends, or else become a mere cypher, forfeiting his goodly birth-right.

Westminster Hall had in those days a row of bookstalls, and at one or another of these Hugo would frequently pause on his way to or from the courts. One day early in December he had parted with Denham, who by no means shared his bookish tendencies, and in his student's cap and long black gown was standing at his favourite stall scanning the titles of the books, and now and again taking up some volume which had for him a special attraction.

The bookseller, a little shrivelled man

with a great gift of persuasiveness, was crying up his own wares with an entire lack of false modesty and a great many adjectives.

‘The finest work, sir, of the year, I assure you, a mighty fine poem, second in number, but not second in quality, to its immortal, far-renowned, majestic predecessor. The greater part Mr. Dryden’s own work, sir, I assure you.’

Hugo took up the second part of ‘Absalom and Achitophel,’ and glanced through it. As he did so he was startled by a sudden greeting from Randolph.

‘What have you there? Dryden’s last? Oh, Tate and Dryden mixed, is it not? Sounds less familiar than Tate and Brady.’

‘Have you read the poem?’ asked Hugo.

‘No, but all the world talks of it, when they are not talking of Captain Clifford and Mrs. Synderfin, or of Lord Gray and his Lady Henrietta. We had best buy it, for I hear there is an allusion to a friend

of ours, or at least an acquaintance.'

He paid for the book, and putting his arm within Hugo's, walked down 'Westminster Hall, and crossing Palace Yard, led the way towards the landing stairs. It was not the least happiness of this memorable autumn that Randolph had grown so much less severe, and treated him so much more as a friend and an equal. Hugo, being what he was, never dreamed of taking the slightest advantage of the change, if possible he treated his guardian with greater deference than ever.

They took a boat to the Temple stairs, and as they glided along the crowded river, passing hundreds of boats and barges all gilded with the ruddy gold light of the setting sun, Randolph opened the new book and searched for the allusion to this mysterious acquaintance.

'Ha! I have it at last!' he exclaimed, 'Now carry your thoughts back to Mondisfield Hall on the night of the 5th October and hearken to this:

‘Next these, a troop of busy spirits press,
Of little fortunes and of conscience less :
With them the tribe, whose luxury had drained
Their banks, in former sequestrations gained :
Who rich and great by past rebellions grew,
And long to fish the troubled streams anew.
Some future hopes, some present payment draws,
To sell their conscience and espouse the cause :
Such stipends those vile hirelings best befit,
Priests without grace, and poets without wit.
Shall that false Hebronite escape our curse,
Judas, that keeps the rebel’s pension purse :
Judas, that pays the treason-writer’s fee :
Judas, that well deserves his namesake’s tree :
Who at Jerusalem’s own gates erects
His college for a nursery of the sects.”

That is fine, and pure Dryden unalloyed
by Tate, I dare swear. How now ! do you
grasp its meaning ?’

Hugo had done his best to forget that
night at Mondisfield Hall, and was by no
means grateful to Randolph for reminding
him of it.

‘I see not whom he means by Judas,’ he
replied, looking far away to the west
where the river flowed calmly on between
the houses and the green gardens to the

peaceful country, reflecting on its calm surface the image of the crimson skies.

‘Cannot you call to mind the man who was spokesman on that occasion? A hideous, lantern-jawed fellow, red and ill-favoured. That was Ferguson, a devil incarnate, and the one whom Mr. Dryden has justly painted as Judas. A pestilent treason-monger who bears a charmed life. He had at one time a training school for those who would enter the ministry.’

‘I mind his face well,’ said Hugo. ‘He was the ill-looking one of the lot.’

‘Forget him not, but bear his face ever in mind. That knowledge may prove useful some day,’ said Randolph, turning over the leaves of the book.

Hugo made no reply, only a vague sense of discomfort crept over him. He fell into a reverie.

“The good old cause revived, a plot requires,
Plots true or false are necessary things
To raise up commonwealths and ruin kings,”

said Randolph, half aloud. Then again, after an interval,

“ Achitophel still wants a chief, and none
Was found so fit as warlike Absolom.”

No, this latter poem is not so fine as that earlier. 'Twas a wonderful parallel to Shaftesbury and the Duke of Monmouth. Old Dryden has read his Bible to some purpose. This poem fills up some gaps in the other, but 'twill never have such influence.'

By this time the boat had reached the landing-place, and the two brothers separated, Randolph to go to his favourite coffee-house, Hugo to go to his chambers to doff his student's cap and gown for the cloak, sword, and broad-brimmed hat which he wore in ordinary life. That reference to Mondisfield Hall had put him into a state of internal tumult which, with all his philosophy and all his easy temper, he could not quell. That he might some day be called upon to make use of the information obtained on that October night was, whenever it occurred to him, a haunting dread. He had a great faculty for

dismissing all thoughts of disagreeable matters, but every now and then this skeleton in his cupboard would disturb his peace. On this December afternoon, he could not quiet it. To read was impossible; the silence of the chambers in King's Bench walk was intolerable to him. He at length resolved to go to his usual haven of refuge, the Denhams' house in Norfolk Street. If anyone could exorcise the troublesome fiend, it would be Mary Denham; and fate was kind to him, for Sir William was asleep on a couch at the far end of the withdrawing-room, and Mary sat by the hearth with her needle-work, ready to charm away his melancholy.

'Stir the fire into a blaze,' she said. 'The light is growing dim, and methinks there is something in your face to be read. What has happened?'

'Naught has happened—naught of any note, that is,' he replied, taking very good care to stir the fire gently, lest Sir William should wake. 'I have just been reading

the new part of "Absolom and Achitophel."

'Has that made you so melancholy? For my part, whether agreeing with it or not, I could not help enjoying it. 'Tis a wondrous satire.'

Hugo made no reply; he seemed to have fallen into a reverie. That he should show so slight an interest in the new poem was strange, and Mary, who knew him better than anyone in the world, felt certain that he had something weighing on his mind. Was he thinking of that blue-eyed Suffolk maiden? she wondered. And, with a little sigh, acknowledged to herself that it was very probable. If only he would have taken her into his confidence, she could have borne it so much better! And, after all, had they not known each other far too long to let foolish ceremony stand between them? There was a chance, too, that she might be able to help him, at any rate to cheer him, and her love to Hugo was too deep to admit of selfish considerations coming in to hinder her. She

had suffered much during the last few weeks, but this made her only the more anxious that he should be happy in his love. It was of his happiness that she thought—her own was a secondary matter. Therefore there could be no jealousy in her love. She loved already this unknown ‘Joyce,’ just because she knew that he loved her.

‘Hugo,’ she said, after some minutes had passed in silence, ‘you did not come hither to stare into the fire, you came to talk to me.’

‘How did you know that?’ he exclaimed, looking up with a startled face.

‘You had “I want to talk with some one,” writ in plain characters on your forehead,’ she said, smiling. ‘And the older and wiser part of the family is either out or asleep, you see. Talk to me, Hugo; tell me what troubles you.’

Her manner was irresistible.

‘It is just that I can speak of it to no one that troubles me,’ he replied, looking

up to her clear, sympathising eyes. 'It is merely a dread—a dread that haunts me at times.'

'And it has haunted you since the fifth day of last October?' she said, softly, thinking of the duel and of fair Joyce Wharncliffe.

Hugo turned ashy pale.

'How can you possibly know?' he cried.
'Who has told you?'

'No one told me, yet, nevertheless, I know,' said Mary, quietly. 'You love Mistress Joyce Wharncliffe, and you fear that you may never see her more.'

'I shall never see her more, 'tis true'—his face softened. 'I love her; that also is true.'

He paused. Mary's hands trembled slightly; she was obliged to let her needle-work fall, and clasp her hands together. That was the only sign of agitation which escaped her, and afterwards she was even more quiet in manner than usual, sitting there in her high-backed chair by the

hearth, with her hands folded in her lap, and her calm eyes watching Hugo's face.

'How did you find this out?' said Hugo at length. 'You are a witch, Mary, to read a man's private thoughts and innermost heart.'

'A very bad compliment for my sympathetic penetration,' she said, smiling. 'I have no desire to try the ducking-stool! But, as I tell you, you bear things writ on your forehead, and I could not help knowing—or rather feeling almost sure.'

'Oh, Mary,' he exclaimed, 'if you could but see her! She is so fresh and fair and lovely. Winsome as a child, and yet with the heart of a woman all the time.'

'And she is beautiful?' questioned Mary.

'So beautiful, that one would dread to think of her ever leaving that quiet country home, where she lives so sheltered a life. And she is as good as she is beautiful, yet there is about her nothing stiff, or narrow, or puritanic, except it

be the purity of her heart and life, which might be deemed puritanic at court.'

'You would be the last to wish to bring her there,' said Mary. 'But, Hugo, I see no cause for dread in all this. Just for the present you may not be able to see her again, but what then? You are both young—all life is before you. And Love can surely overcome a few obstacles, else it were not worthy the name.'

'That is not the dread which haunts me, that is something widely different. Mary, promise not to question me, promise to reveal to no living soul any thoughts which may connect themselves with what I shall say. Of this dread I am not at liberty to speak in plain words. But thus far help me. Suppose to yourself such a case as the following. A father becomes acquainted with certain facts which may be of great use to the Government; he makes his son observe the said facts, that he may be able to bring him forward as a second witness. The

son, owing obedience to the Government, and having sworn in all things to obey his father, has grave doubts as to the way in which the information has been obtained—thinks it was treacherously obtained. Moreover, he, beginning to think for himself, sees that ‘oppression’ is the watchword of his father’s party, and ‘liberty’ the watchword of the oppressed. This, at any rate, he thinks he sees; but being as yet young, ignorant, lacking experience, he is scarce fit for any sort of action. When the time comes, and he is called upon to bear witness to what he has seen, what course is he to pursue?’

Mary was silent. She was too wise a counsellor ever to be in a hurry, and this was a curious and complicated case which Hugo had put before her.

‘’Tis very hard to see what would be right,’ she said at length. ‘I cannot yet feel sure, but in such extremity it would doubtless be borne in upon a man what he ought to do. His con-

science would show him what was right.'

'Conscience!' he exclaimed, impatiently, longing for some infallible authority outside himself. 'Conscience! I want something more definite, more unmistakeable than that.'

'Surely,' she said, 'that is definite, if we train ourselves to listen to it, and ever in all things obey it.'

'But conscience is the plea of the conventiclers; they profess to suffer for conscience sake.'

'And doubtless do,' said Mary. 'Do you not think that they may truly and honestly be following their conscience, and playing that part in the world's history which God saw to be right and necessary? And in truth, Hugo, I thought not to hear you of all people speak against this. Unless I am much mistaken, unless Rupert has misled me, there was once a time when you braved the sneers of the on-lookers and took your stand on this same conscience-hearkening.'

Hugo could once more see in imagination that Suffolk roadside, could once more feel that terrible struggle which, though he did not know it, had rendered it for ever impossible for him to return to his old peaceful submission and self-effacement.

‘But then I saw clearly what was right. That was a very simple case. Now, in the case of that son whom I mentioned to you, matters are different, there is no plain right and plain wrong.’

‘But there will be when the time comes,’ said Mary, quietly.

‘But how to see it—to be sure of it?’ he faltered. ‘Worst of all, how to do it!’

‘Yes, there will be the hard part,’ said Mary, thoughtfully, ‘The seeing will surely be clear enough, but the doing?’ She was silent for a minute. When she spoke again her face had changed, and there was something of diffidence in her voice.

‘It has made me think of one day long ago when you and Rupert had both got into trouble at school, the time when Dr. Busby set you to learn all the collects and all the articles.’

‘And flogged us till we said them without a fault,’ said Hugo, laughing. ‘I remember that part well enough, but the collects and the articles I have clean forgotten.’

‘And I too, the greater number, though I learnt them with you,’ said Mary. ‘But there is one that always seemed to me so precisely what one wanted that I never could forget it, and from that day forth ever used it. It is the one about “the spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful.”’

‘I too will use it,’ he said, quickly. ‘Ah! how long ago those days seem, Mary. Can you not remember how we all three sat up in the attic with Sir William’s big prayer-door? I can see the room now and the window that looked out on the

river. The only article I have the ghost of a recollection of is "Original sin," "As the Pelagians do vainly talk,"—I can say that one sentence; and, as we learnt it, I remember the king's barge went past and there came sounds of music and distant babel of voices. I ever think of the "Pelagians" when in a great assembly one hears the buzz of voices and can distinguish no words.'

Mary smiled, and in another minute their *tête-à-tête* was ended, for Colonel Sydney was announced, and Hugo, in the happiness of meeting his hero, had no more thought for the skeleton in his cupboard.

'I have had tickets presented to me for Dryden's new play,' said Sydney. 'I came to know whether I might have the pleasure of escorting you and your aunt, Mistress Mary.'

'We should greatly enjoy it,' said Mary, 'my aunt was talking of it but now at dinner.'

'They would both fain see the new play,' said Sir William, who had been roused by Sydney's entrance. 'As for me I have no time to spare for the theatre, and they are ever glad of an escort.'

'I seldom affect it myself,' said Sydney, 'but they tell me that this play is so fraught with political design that one ought to see it. Mr. Dryden has become the mere tool of the court of late. 'Tis pity that a man of such parts should so demean himself.'

'And he gains but little by it,' said Hugo. 'I heard him say but yesternight at Will's, that his salary as laureate had not been paid for years.'

'Poor devil!' said Sydney. 'And in the meantime the Duchess of Portsmouth enjoys £12,000 a year of the nation's money! Well, you will allow me to escort you then? I will be with you presently. And you,' turning to Hugo, 'you will accompany us, will you not?'

After such an invitation from his hero, it was not to be imagined for a moment that thoughts of perplexing cases of conscience, of plots and revelations should trouble Hugo. When that evening he entered Drury Lane with Sydney, Lady Denham, and Mary he was probably the happiest person in the theatre. Life, with that one exception of the skeleton now securely locked away, seemed to him particularly bright and hopeful. Mary had spoken cheering words to him about Joyce, and had proved herself a delightfully sympathetic listener, Randolph had treated him as an equal and a friend, Sydney had not only asked him to the play, but had insisted that he should go back afterwards and sup with him.

This evening of the 4th December, 1682, was a memorable evening in the theatrical world. London had at that time two theatres, Drury Lane, known as the King's House, and the Duke's House in Dorset Gardens. This latter house was rich in the

possession of Betterton, the greatest actor of the day, and they mounted their plays far better than was done at Drury Lane.

London was not large enough, however, to support two theatres comfortably, and for the last few years the management of the Duke's had done all in their power to cripple Killigrew, the manager of the King's House, so that he might be forced to consent to a union. This had just been effected, and this evening was to witness the first new play brought out by the united companies. The choice was doubtless a wise one, for not only was Dryden extremely popular, but this particular play of the 'Duke of Guise' had already been much talked of. It had been in the hands of the Lord Chamberlain for some months, he had hesitated whether to licence it or not, for the parallel between the Duke of Guise and the Duke of Monmouth, and their representative plots against their kings, was dangerously close. At length, however, he had yielded, and

on the first night everyone rushed to see the long-talked-of piece. The house was crowded in every part, and in the pit was a turbulent assembly who, if not pleased, would assuredly express their feelings loudly. Sydney studied the audience with his keen, thoughtful eyes; even now Hugo felt sure he was musing as ever on the state of the country, closely watching the people that he might as far as possible know the state of their feelings, and rightly estimate their worth. At length the buzz of conversation was hushed, the roar of the 'Pelagians,' as Hugo would have put it, was suddenly stilled, for Smith, one of the best actors, appeared before the curtain to speak the prologue.

He spoke it well, and it was undoubtedly clever, but from the bold beginning, 'Our play's a parallel,' the whole thing bristled with bitter allusions to the events of the day, ending with a piece of satire which could not fail to enrage the Whigs.

‘Make London independent of the crown :
A realm apart : the kingdom of the town.
Let ignoramus juries find no traitors,
And ignoramus poets scribble satires.
And, that your meaning none may fail to scan,
Do what in coffee-houses you began,—
Pull down the master, and set up the man.’

The play opened with a scene representing a meeting of the Council of Sixteen, who were the leaders of the conspiracy. A reference to sheriffs and charters made the Whig portion of the audience angry, but they restrained themselves until Bussy, one of the conspirators, uttered the words,

‘Our city bands are twenty thousand strong.’

Now Shaftesbury had been wont to boast of his ‘twenty thousand brisk boys in the city,’ whom he could summon at a moment’s notice, and a storm of hisses greeted this allusion.

The following scene between a magician who had espoused the cause of Guise, and the Devil, rather amused the audience, but signs were not wanting before long

that the play would stir up yet greater enmity between the two parties.

As for Sydney, he sat in his place gravely watching the development of the story, making no sign whatever, till in the third act the scene between Grillon and the sheriffs produced a riotous expression of disapproval from a great part of the audience, and a frown upon his calm brow.

With the fourth act, matters only grew worse. The scene in the Louvre, in which the king has an interview with the Duke of Guise, could not fail to offend all who had the slightest regard for Monmouth. The appearance of an evil spirit in the garb of a preacher of the Gospel, and his assurance that 'ten thousand devils more are in this habit,' also gave great offence; while the touching scenes between Marmoutiere and Guise were so evidently intended to refer to the Duchess of Monmouth, and her endeavours to restrain her husband, that the audience hissed angrily.

At length, Guise having been murdered in the palace, the King pronounced his coldly prudent wish that Fate might bring every traitor to ruin who dared the 'vengeance of indulgent kings,' and the play closed.

Then Mrs. Cook, a favourite actress, stepped before the curtain, and spoke the epilogue, which, by its coarse brutality, could not but disgust every unprejudiced person.

'Good Lord!' exclaimed Sydney, 'what will women come to? Methinks jesting about hangmen ill becomes them.'

His words were half lost in the deafening tumult which ensued. Applause from one half of the house, and indignant expressions of disgust from the other. A desperate endeavour on the part of the court party to prevent the play being damned on its first night, and a storm of groans and hisses from the Whigs.

The house was still all in an uproar when Sydney suggested to the ladies that

they should leave, and having escorted them to their coach, he put his arm within Hugo's, and with a man bearing a link in front of them, they walked to his house, never once speaking.

Hugo had hitherto met Sydney either at the Denhams' or at one of the coffee-houses ; he had never before been to his house, and coming that evening from the Egyptian darkness of the streets, which were lighted only by the links which foot-passengers were fain to carry, he was almost too much dazzled by the sudden return to bright lights to see. Sydney took him into a room where preparations for supper were being made by a French man-servant.

'Mr. Wharncliffe will sup with me, Ducasse. Lay covers for two,' he said ; then, as the man left the room, 'That is my faithful servant, and at the same time my friend, Joseph Ducasse. I should have fared ill without him.'

'We too know what a faithful serving-man can prove,' said Hugo. 'We have

one of Cromwell's Ironsides, as staunch and trusty an old fellow as any in England. 'Twas he that taught me your name as a boy.'

'What! Was he in my troop?' questioned Sydney, his face lighting up with keen interest.

'I think not,' said Hugo. 'He was ever in Cromwell's regiment. But he mentioned seeing you at Marston Moor.'

'Perchance he is my brave rescuer!' exclaimed Sydney. 'Did he ever tell you of the deed of gallantry to which I owe my life?'

'Nay, I have heard naught of any rescue,' said Hugo; 'but he used to tell of the battle, and of how gallantly you charged that evening at the head of my Lord Manchester's regiment of horse, and how when men were being mowed down beside you like grain, you ever kept a good courage, and persevered long after you were sore wounded.'

'Methinks, then, I may at last have

found my gallant rescuer,' said Sydney. 'Draw your chair to the hearth; I will tell you a story. That same evening, on Marston Moor, we had had the sharpest work I had ever seen. I was then but little older than you are now, and had not had over-much experience; but there are many who maintain still that the fighting there was more severe than at any other battle during the whole war. It was evening when it began—seven o'clock. Well, we had been fighting for what seemed an eternity, and, but for Cromwell's timely aid, should have been routed. I was in command of a troop of horse in my Lord of Manchester's regiment, and Goring was giving us an ill time of it, when Cromwell, having utterly routed Prince Rupert's troopers, came to our help. By that time I had fallen, desperately wounded. I can well remember coming-to after an interval of unconsciousness. The sunset light had faded out of the sky; but the moon had risen,

and there was light enough to show me that I was within the enemy's power. At that minute, however, there stepped forward from the ranks one of Cromwell's Ironsides, rushed onward to where I lay, seized me in his arms, and bore me off into safety. Seeing his great love and courage, I naturally desired to know his name, that I might in some way reward him. What do you think the noble fellow replied? "Sir," he said, "I did it not for that, but merely for the love of you. And therefore, as to my name, I desire to be excused."'

'And you never learnt who he was?'

'Never. To this day I have not the faintest idea. No one noticed him; how could they, in the midst of such a fight? Among five thousand slain, the rescue of one insignificant unit is little likely to draw notice. It will remain for ever unknown save to him that did it.'

'It would have been just like Jeremiah,' said Hugo, musing. 'But of course I could never ask him.'

‘No, no,’ said Sydney; ‘let it remain as the brave fellow would have it. He shall be for ever unknown, yet never forgotten. Come, let us sup; if that accursed play has not spoilt your appetite.’

‘I fear I am too much of a “damned neuter” for that,’ said Hugo, smiling and quoting the words of the epilogue,

“Neither fish, nor flesh, nor good red-herring,”
as Mrs. Cook would say.’

Sydney made no reply for a minute. The speech was one which he could little understand, and he was not as a rule patient with aught that did not coincide with his own views, while opposition of any sort invariably called forth that overbearing temper which was well-known to all his acquaintances. But there was something about Hugo which made it impossible to take exception to his words, however little in accord with the hearer’s opinions. He was so frank, so outspoken, and yet so humble that it was impossible to treat him like the rest of the world.

Moreover, although people in general were quite ready to credit Sydney with resolute courage, and the 'huge deal of wit' which his mother had discovered in him while but a lad of fourteen, they had not the insight to perceive the 'sweetness of nature' which Lady Leicester had chronicled as perceived by all his early French acquaintances.

Perhaps he had now to a certain extent been soured by the difficulties and disappointments of a singularly wearing life. But there were some few who were able to perceive and to touch into life that tenderness, that lovingness, which was hidden under the stern exterior; and of these was Hugo. Therefore the two were always happy in each other's society. Each awakened in his companion that quality which was most apt to lie dormant—in Sydney tenderness, in Hugo strength.

'You will not ever be a "damned neuter,"' said Sydney, after the silence, in which he had been thoughtfully watch-

ing Hugo's face. 'The world cannot spare you, Hugo; some day you will prove worker as well as watcher.'

'And yet, though I know you abhor them, I cannot but see some merit in these much-abused Trimmers,' said Hugo. 'Surely the truth doth oftentimes lie betwixt extremes? Surely there is much to be said on either side? And then definitely committing yourself to a party, you commit yourself, maybe, to much that you do not altogether approve.'

'Life is a long series of minor disappointments,' said Sydney. 'Every failure to meet with your own ideal, both in private affairs and in the affairs of the nation, is a disappointment. But what then: such things are inevitable, you must make up your mind to them. You have thought, have studied the case, have arrived at your ideal of government; we will say that it is a Republic. Good; then unite yourself with that party which works hard to secure the rights of the people

from wrongful invasion. What though perchance they go not so far as you would have them in some matters and further in others? You have to look at the matter in gross, not in detail; you must weigh the advantages with the disadvantages. Otherwise there could be no national progress; the spirits that can see a little further than their fellows would all stand aloof, so many helpless units of no service to their country. Union is strength, and to obtain union those who love the people and would fain serve their country, must be willing, as far as may honourably be, to sink their differences. Should your party be faithless to the cause of freedom, then leave it and go back to your plough like Cincinnatus. That is what I myself was forced to do.'

'I want to ask you one question, sir,' said Hugo, looking up quickly. 'There is ever much talk of the Duke of Monmouth's intentions; what think you, would that be for the good of the country?'

‘If you mean would I advise any man to volunteer to-day for Monmouth’s cause, I would reply no, without hesitation ; the people love him, but the times are not yet ripe. It behoves all men, however, to watch the signs of the times and to be ready for instant action when the tyranny hath grown insupportable. As for me, it is all one to me whether James, Duke of York, or James, Duke of Monmouth, be king, so long as the people regain their rights. Monmouth’s chiefest recommendation to me is this : his title will not be altogether good, therefore he will be sure to rule well and for the benefit of his people ; ’twill be to his own interest.’

‘Are you acquainted with him?’

‘I have but met him twice,’ said Sydney. ‘The first time my Lord Howard cozened us both, told me the duke would fain be introduced to me, and told the duke that I had begged him to make us acquainted.’

‘Not over-scrupulous,’ said Hugo, smiling.

‘No; yet he did it doubtless with a good intent. I believe Howard to be a true patriot, and this he thought was doubtless warrantable for the good of the country.’

‘And think you the duke’s cause is indeed strong?’

‘Strong, yet not strong enough,’ said Sydney. ‘All that wise men can do is to watch and be ready, to know each other, and to know who may be trusted. I am trusting you not a little by speaking thus boldly, for in these days I might be sent to the Tower for using such freedom of speech. Yet methinks I would right willingly trust you with my life.’

The blood rushed to Hugo’s cheeks, his quiet, grey eyes shone with a strange light.

‘I’ faith, sir, I would gladly die for you,’ he said, in a low voice. ‘Could that prove my love.’

There was such perfect sincerity in his manner, that even a very hard-hearted person could not fail to have been touched.

As for Sydney, his eyes grew soft and humid, and his stern face relaxed into a smile which Hugo remembered to his dying day.

‘I believe you, my son,’ he said, grasping his hand. ‘And I trust you with all my heart.’

CHAPTER IX.

THE MASQUE AT GRAY'S INN.

Thus Fortune's pleasant fruits by friends increased be;
The bitter, sharp, and sour by friends allay'd to thee;
That when thou dost rejoice, then doubled is thy joy;
And eke in cause of care the less is thy annoy.

ANON. 1557.

RANDOLPH watched with some curiosity the process of Hugo's development. That winter he left him very much to himself, exacting implicit obedience, as ever, but taking good care to issue but few commands. He also increased his influence over him by showing much more interest in his concerns, and even at times treating him with an affection which bound his brother to him as nothing else could have done.

Hugo had never in his life been so happy, and insensibly he began to rely less on his books for interest and for companionship. The world of realities, the world political, the world of living men and women began to interest him as it had never done before, and under Sydney's guidance his character rapidly strengthened and matured—rapidly, yet to himself, of course, insensibly.

He found the days of that winter almost too short for all the interests that had to be crowded into them. He was introduced to the Green Ribbon Club, at Chancery Lane end, where the 'advanced' men of the time used to meet, much scoffed at by the Tories. He was constantly with Sydney, who, now that his friend Penn had gone to America to carry out the system of government which he and Sydney had devised between them, was glad enough of some fresh interest. He was still as faithful as ever to the Denhams. His spare time would often be spent in Sir William's

private laboratory, or in long excursions into the surrounding country in search of spoils animal or vegetable, for the use of one or another of his scientific friends. He was asked more than once by the little Duchess of Grafton to meet interesting celebrities at her father's house, and Randolph insisted upon a certain amount of attendance at the court. Thus with his necessary routine of study, his time was fully occupied, and contact with the world and the necessity of managing for himself began to turn him into something more like the man of action after Jeremiah's own heart. Apparently he was going to surprise the old soldier after all, and prove himself to be better than a mere visionary. So far all was well. He had never been a great talker, and he had revealed to his brother nothing whatever of the conversation which passed between him and Sydney. Randolph knew better than to ask him, and was quite capable of playing a waiting game. So all went happily, and

had anyone told Hugo that a snare was laid for him, and that underneath all this fair semblance was a hideous reality, he would not have believed them. The sincere are always slow to suspect insincerity in others. Almost invariably they have to buy their experience, and to pay a high price for it.

For Mary Denham the time went but heavily; being proud, with that sort of maidenly pride which was perhaps more often to be found in past times, she barely confessed her trouble to her own heart even. That it was there she knew full well, but she rarely, if ever, formed it into words in her own mind. Instead she devised a new set of embroidered covers for the chairs in the withdrawing-room, and, finding that insufficient, she took Sydney's advice and threw herself into her uncle's pursuits with an ardour which gained for her the nick-name of the 'Blue-stocking' from Rupert. Perhaps inevitably her manner towards Hugo changed a

little. The change was extremely slight, and yet to one of his acute perceptions it could not remain unnoticed. It troubled him a little even in the midst of his happiness, and in all the excitement of his first entrance into London life, but manlike it never occurred to him to connect the change with that talk they had had about Joyce Wharncliffe.

It was not until Christmas Day that he had any opportunity of seeing her alone. Christmas was not an altogether enjoyable time to him, but he had a certain affection for the day, and this year was his first opportunity of sharing it all through with Randolph, for on the previous Christmas he had not been admitted as a student at the Temple, and could not share all the festivities in Hall.

Service in the Temple church over, the gentlemen and students repaired to the Inner Temple Hall, where breakfast was prepared—a breakfast which from time

immemorial had consisted of brawn, mustard, and malmsey. But the event of the day was the dinner, to which as usual they went in their cloaks and hats, but carefully laying aside their swords, which had never been allowed in Hall since a day long ago when a certain Sir John Davis, afterwards Lord Chief Justice of King's Bench, had once bastinadoed a man at dinner. From that time forward no weapon had been allowed to put in an appearance, save a knife or dagger which was at times indispensable in cutting up the meat. Hugo had never before dined at the Christmas dinner; and with Randolph at a little distance among the gentlemen of his standing, and Denham beside him, ever ready with jests and laughter, the time passed merrily enough. The whole assembly uncovered while grace was sung, and had barely resumed their hats and places when the doors were thrown wide, and there entered a procession of serving-men and singers with the boar's

head. Then the vaulted roof rang with the strains of the merry old carol, everyone joining lustily in the chorus. The words had been sung for many generations, and ran as follows :

'The bore's heade in hande bring I,
With garlandes gay and rosemary:
I pray you all synge merely,
Qui estis in convivio.

CHORUS :—Caput apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino.

'The bore's heade, I understande,
Is the chief servyce in this lande :
Loke whereever it be fande;
Servite cum cantico.

CHORUS :—Caput, &c.

'Be gladde, Lordes, both more and lasse,
For this hath ordayned our stewarde,
To chere you all this Christmasse,
The bore's heade with mustarde.

CHORUS :—Caput, &c.'

The quaint old customs, the great bunches of evergreens with which the hall was decorated, the genial good-fellowship, all were enjoyable to Hugo; but by-and-by, when he had been asked again and again to sing, and had done

his duty by the assembly; when many had sung themselves hoarse, and many more had made themselves drunk, and those who were still sober enough had betaken themselves to dicing, to the satisfaction of the butler, whose box received a certain percentage of the winnings, and who often made in a single night as much as fifty pounds—then he began to weary of his noisy surroundings. Never till now had he passed a Christmas without going to the house in Norfolk Street. He would leave these revellers, and see how matters fared with his friends; he would try to discover the reason of that strange and unaccountable change in Mary.

All seemed as usual at the Denhams'. Mary wore a festival dress of amber satin, and she talked gaily enough to the aunts and cousins who always spent Christmas Day with them. Yet, whenever she turned to him, he was quite conscious that she was making an effort to talk; the ease,

the perfect certainty of friendship was gone. It saddened him. What had he said? What had he done to bring about this change? Was the alteration in him or in Mary? Was the fault his or hers? He would fain have persuaded himself that the change existed only in his fancy; but his keen perceptions were not to be thus hoodwinked. An indefinable 'something' had arisen between them; and in friendship the 'indefinable' is far more dangerous than the actual and palpable barriers. Barriers may be surmounted; but who is to surmount that which, though real and unmistakeable, is yet incomprehensible? His friend was slipping away from him, and he knew it.

Christmas evening was not a favourable opportunity for any sort of explanation. He watched in vain for a chance of even a few minutes' talk with Mary. There was snapdragon for the benefit of the little cousins, and then Sir William said they could not spend the Christmas without

one game of Hoodman Blind; and thus, amid much laughter and mirth, the hours slipped by, and, save Hugo and Mary, everyone enjoyed the merry-making.

Matters went on in this way for some weeks. Never could Hugo find Mary alone, and never could he get over that curious feeling of division between them, which made meeting far more of a pain than a pleasure.

At length came an opportunity, which in a sort of despair he determined to seize. It was the 2nd of February, and there was to be a masque ball at Gray's Inn. The Denhams were personal friends of Sir Richard Gipps, the Master of the Revels, and Hugo knew that Mary was sure to be there; he also had received an invitation, and surely the 'vain talk of the Pelagians' would afford him shelter sufficient for a private conversation.

The hall at Gray's Inn, though not so large as the Middle Temple Hall, was nevertheless a capital ball-room, and its

carved oak roof showed to advantage in the soft light of the myriad candles ranged in sconces round the walls. Hugo arrived rather late, only just before the royal party indeed, and the scene was picturesque enough to divert him from his anxiety for the time. The blaze of lights, the flashing of the ladies' diamonds, the wonderful richness and variety of colour, and the curious effect of the masks worn by everyone present pleased him greatly. Almost before he had taken in the scene, the people rose at the announcement that the King was approaching, and immediately afterwards Charles entered with the Queen, who was passionately fond of dancing though she danced but ill, the Duke and Duchess of York, and the rest of the court. All wore masks, but many of them were easily recognizable to Hugo.

It was not until the dancing was about to begin that he remembered Mary. His friend was here somewhere in this gay

crowd, and he must find her, spite of her disguise. Perhaps explanations might be easier when the face of each would be protected, and no expression visible save in the eyes.

But how to find her? The King had already led out a lady for a single *coranto*, and by rights Hugo should have been respectfully watching his sovereign. He cast no single glance, however, at the dancers, but sought everywhere with eager restless eyes for the dark brown curls and the slim figure, a little below the medium height, for which alone in all this multitude he cared.

‘You are searching for some one?’ said a voice at his elbow, a sweet voice, in which there lurked innocent, girlish laughter. Two bright eyes looked out from behind the mask, smiling at him, and he instantly recognised the little Duchess of Grafton.

He had not expected to meet her, and was pleased, for she was one of the few

pure-minded women whom he knew, and her youth and her romantic story, together with a certain sweet discretion very rare in one of her age, made her strangely fascinating.

‘May I have the pleasure of dancing with your grace?’ he said.

‘You have recognised me!’ she said, laughing. ‘And yet methinks I was right well disguised. Ay, I will dance with you, and you can pursue your search meanwhile.’

‘I was looking for Mistress Mary Denham,’ said Hugo. ‘But it is not easy amid a host of maskers to discover even a friend of long standing.’

‘Yet ’tis not long since I heard you sing a ditty in which over far greater difficulties you maintained “Love would find out a way,”’ said the little duchess.

She had already built up a romance for these two friends of hers, and, seeing that her own romance had been all acted out in the days of her childhood, and her fate

fixed before she had reached her teens, her innocent match-making was excusable enough. Hugo thought of Joyce—he always thought of her when singing that song—then, recollecting the connection of the duchess's words, he coloured crimson, and was thankful that he wore a mask.

‘Mistress Denham has been my friend ever since our childhood,’ he said, quickly. ‘But friendship, however keen, however true, gives not that power of which the song speaks.’

The little duchess was disappointed; she perceived from his manner that he was assuredly in love,—but not with Mary.

‘You men have not so nice an observation as we of the weaker sex,’ she said. ‘Now I perceived Mistress Mary at once.’

‘Tell me,’ said Hugo, quickly, ‘is she near?’

‘You are wanting, as I said, in nice observation,’ said the little duchess, who could tease upon occasion. ‘I recognised her at once by her little feet; she hath the

smallest and loveliest in the room. Now, if you were to watch, to exercise your powers of observation——'

She looked at him laughingly, as he rapidly scanned the feet of the dancers.

'She wears a dress of white satin, and pearls round her neck,' continued the little duchess, 'and her cavalier is——'

She broke off, for Hugo, with a start of surprise, at length recognised Mary Denham in the lady who was at that moment dancing the *coranto* with a gentleman magnificently arrayed in blue satin slashed with yellow, whom he had discovered to be his old school-fellow Matthew Prior, now an undergraduate at St. John's College, Cambridge.

His mind was somewhat preoccupied when his turn came and he had to lead out the Duchess of Grafton, but as usual he danced extremely well, better—at least one person thought so—than anyone else in the hall. Mary was sitting now beside her aunt; she watched every part of the com-

plicated dance with an absorbed interest, ever following with her eye the slight graceful figure in crimson velvet, laced with silver, white silk hose gartered below the knee with silver braid, and shoes in which there glittered the newly-introduced silver shoe-buckles.

And yet, when Hugo drew near, that curious barrier made itself more than ever felt, they were no longer the familiar friends they had once been. She was nevertheless glad to dance with him, and when, by-and-by, he had found at length that opportunity for uninterrupted talk for which he had waited so long, perhaps, even though her heart beat painfully, she was yet glad that the present state of things should have been to him unbearable. She knew quite well what he was going to say : how she was to answer him she could not so plainly tell.

‘ Mary,’ he said, his voice falling very sweetly upon her ear, amid all the uproar of general conversation, and the twanging

and scraping of lutes and fiddles. 'Mary, what has come betwixt us of late? I ever deemed our friendship of too long standing to admit of any change save that of growth.'

'Surely it must change as we grow older,' she replied, in as matter-of-fact a voice as she could command. 'Not of course in degree, but in manner. We cannot ever be children.'

'Must age stiffen us—freeze us into formality?' questioned Hugo.

'Nay, I said not so,' replied Mary, smiling. 'When was I ever stiff or formal in your company?'

'Those perchance were cold words to describe what I mean. And yet of late I have ever been aware of some change in you, in your manner.'

'You are no longer the Westminster boy with whom I used to play, you are a man of the world, you begin to mix much in society—how then should you find all as it used to be in the old times?

We have both of us left childhood behind us.'

'And must friendship be left behind too?' he questioned.

'You mistake my meaning,' said Mary, 'I mean only that your changed life, your fresh interests, make you fancy a change in me.'

'Nay,' he said, 'the change is not in my fancy, never will you persuade me of that. The change is there, and it has come to this, that, whereas in old times I came to Norfolk Street, knowing I should find there all I had learnt to look for, now I come there in dread, or in an expectation which is ever frustrated.'

'How mean you?' said Mary, falteringly. Her mask veiled her face effectually, but something of agitation betrayed itself in her voice.

'There! I have vexed you!' exclaimed Hugo, full of self-reproach. 'Do not for one moment dream that the house will not ever be a home to me, the one home

for me in all London! but yet of late it has come to pass that I no longer can go there feeling sure of you as I once did. There has been some change in you, though you deny it never so much.'

'Hugo!' she exclaimed, impetuously, 'I have treated you ill. And you are quite right, there has been some slight change in my manner. I tried to help it but failed.'

'What have I done?' said Hugo, bewildered. 'Has any slanderer come betwixt us with some idle tale?'

'Nay, there has been no slanderer,' said Mary, smiling. 'Think you that I would credit what the idle gossips have to charge you with? Come, Hugo, you have in good truth lost all trust in me if you can think that.'

'But why, then, this change?' said Hugo, anxiously.

'It was my own foolish fault,' said Mary, speaking quickly, forcibly, and with

the manner of one who desires above all things to make matters clear. 'I thought you would no longer have need of me; I thought, after that last talk we had on the night of the play, that sisters—I had been a sort of sister to you—were no longer needed when brides are found. What should you want with friends when you are in love, you foolish boy?'

In truth, had Hugo not been in love, he might have noticed that the little laugh which ended this confession was not altogether a natural one. But he was desperately in love, and he was but nineteen; moreover, the Duchess of Grafton's accusation had been one of the true words spoken in jest—he was not by nature observant.

'How could you think that!' he exclaimed. 'It is the very reason that makes me need you more than ever. That day you cheered me and comforted me—made it seem possible that I might at least see Mistress Wharncliffe once again. But

how can even that hope satisfy me, if you turn from me? Do without you, forsooth!

Mary's fingers tightened upon the handle of her fan; for a minute she was quite silent, and very still.

'You will not condemn me to aught so miserable,' continued Hugo, pleadingly. 'You will no longer dream that I can spare my best friend. What do you imagine my life would have been had it not been for you?'

'By your own confession I have rendered you miserable these two months!' said Mary, with a very tremulous smile. 'But, Hugo, you shall never again feel that aught has come betwixt us. I will ever believe that you still have need of a sister, and you shall come to our house when you will, and shall learn once more to feel sure of me. Are you satisfied?'

Of course he was satisfied. What more could he have desired? And she herself? Well, with her matters must of course be

very different. His perfect happiness involved, though he little thought it, her loss. But, fervently wishing his happiness, she accepted patiently and contentedly the part assigned her.

Even at that very time, when Hugo led her down the hall to take her place in the country-dance which was just beginning, she was not exactly unhappy. He needed her still, and, moreover, she knew now, what she had never before even guessed, that she had been a power and an influence in his life. That night, in the gay throng gathered in Gray's Inn Hall, there were many who bore a heavier heart and a less innocent conscience than Mistress Mary Denham.

CHAPTER X.

PENS Hurst.

Detestable bribes! worse than the oaths now in fashion in this mercenary court. I mean to owe neither my life nor my liberty to such means. When the innocence of my actions will not protect me, I will stay away till the storm be overpast . . . I must live by just means, or serve to just ends, or not at all.

ALGERNON SYDNEY.

ONE day towards the end of April Hugo happened to meet Colonel Sydney in the Park.

‘You are the very man I wanted!’ exclaimed the Republican. ‘Look you, on the morrow I go down to Penshurst for a fortnight’s rest and change. Come with me; it would do you good.’

‘There is nothing I should so much

like !' said Hugo, his heart beating high with happiness at the prospect. 'An my brother will consent to it, I will assuredly come, sir.'

'I had forgot your guardian,' said Sydney. 'But get his leave if you can, for I would fain have you with me ; and truly he cannot care so much as you think for your making your way at court, else he would not have permitted you to make my acquaintance.'

As he spoke, he glanced rather scornfully in the direction of the water, where the King was feeding his favourite ducks ; then, his face softening again, he nodded kindly to his young follower, and passed on.

Much to Hugo's surprise, Randolph gave a ready consent to his request, and the next morning found him riding into Kent by Sydney's side, in the seventh heaven of happiness.

How often in after-days he lived over again that memorable visit—and how little

he thought at the time that the calm enjoyment of those country days, the rare delight of close intercourse with that great mind, were to fit and prepare him for meeting a sea of troubles.

It was a beautiful spring afternoon when they dismounted at the great doorway of Penshurst Place. Lord Leicester was at his London house, and Hugo was by no means sorry to hear of his absence, for he knew well that the two brothers were not on good terms with each other, and naturally he was glad to have his friend and master to himself.

They had dined on the road, but Sydney ordered supper to be served at an early hour in the picture-gallery, then, when they had changed their dusty travelling dresses, he took Hugo round the beautiful old house.

‘You must learn your way about,’ he said, with a smile. ‘’Tis not so hard as you might think to lose your way in this rambling old mansion.’

‘I can well imagine missing the way,’ said Hugo, delighting in the beautiful rooms as only a poet can. ‘I suppose you, sir, know it all by heart.’

‘Ay,’ he said, with a sad smile, ‘I could walk it blindfold—every inch of the house and grounds is graven on my heart,—and often in exile have I roamed in imagination through these rooms, and grown sick for another sight of the old home. What games of All-hid we used to have! The place wants children now, it feels bare and cold. Why, this hall where we now stand—I can remember it decked out with greenery for the Christmas feast! We all feasted together that one day of the year, and after the good old custom, the retainers at yonder side tables, and my father and mother and the guests at the table on yonder dais, with such of us brats as could behave ourselves fitly. Ah, well! Ah, well! ’tis like enough that fifty years should bring changes! My father and mother dead—Henry dead—

Philip estranged from me—Robert a courtier and a rake—pretty Dorothy the beauty of bygone days—Isabella ungrateful and cold, though I did my best for her.’

He seemed to have forgotten Hugo’s presence, and to be thinking aloud. Presently he recollected himself.

‘Tis a fine old hall, is it not!’ he said, looking lovingly round the white walls with their groups of armour. ‘Yonder, in that black gallery, the minstrels played on high days and holidays, and through those archways beneath I can well remember seeing the mummers file in on a winter’s night. ’Twas here too that in Commonwealth days we acted “Coriolanus,” which same acting made no little stir, and was even construed into a hit at the Protector.’

They left the hall, and Sydney led the way up a winding stone staircase and into a large wainscotted room, where he paused to show Hugo a picture of his ancestor, Sir Philip Sydney.

‘Oh, is that Sir Philip?’ said Hugo, eagerly. ‘I have often wondered what the face could have been on which Roydon bestowed such high praise;’ and he quoted the well-known lines beginning,

‘A sweet, attractive kind of grace.’

Sydney, watching him, thought the words would have been quite as appropriate to the speaker, but he only said,

‘Yes, that is Philip Sydney. He was always a great hero with me as a boy. I remember coveting my brother’s name, and vexing myself that they had dubbed me with so unwieldy a prefix as Algernon.’

Hugo turned from the young, sweet, intellectual face of the ancestor to another picture which hung near the hearth. He recognised it instantly—there was no mistaking the auburn colouring, the sad eyes, the grave, austere face of the patriot upon which, even then, though the picture had been taken many years ago, sorrow had set her seal.

‘This face for me!’ he exclaimed, in-

voluntarily. 'Tis worth fifty Sir Philips !'

'Shall I tell you why you think so?' said Sydney, while for the moment something of the sweet attractive look of his ancestor dawned in his usually grave eyes. 'It is because we naturally admire those who are our opposites. No, you must not depreciate my hero for the sake of crying up your very faulty teacher. Philip Sydney had a happy lot; he was universally beloved, he died a happy death, and his generous thought for another has set a high example to all succeeding generations. What more could a man wish for? This room we are coming to was furnished for Queen Elizabeth; but we will not linger now, but come to the gallery where I have ordered a fire—the evenings feel chilly to me after my long stay in Southern France.'

The gallery which they now entered was a noble room, and one which Sydney preferred to any other in the house. Like every student, he loved pacing to and fro,

he loved air and light and space. Ducasse had arranged his books and papers for him on a table near the great window, while a second table near the hearth was prepared for supper. Mellow, sunset light filled the whole place, gilding the polished floor and the wainscotted walls, lighting up the portraits and the somewhat stiff array of high-backed chairs and carved tables laden with great china vases. Hugo looked down the long vista, and thought he could be very happy here; but close to the door a picture of three children brought him to a pause.

Sydney smiled.

‘You will not so easily recognise this, I think.’

But even here Hugo was not at fault. Two of the boys were just the conventional painted children of bygone times, but the one to the right had something vigorous and real about his whole attitude. He was a little red-haired fellow, holding a hound in a leash with one hand, and with

the other grasping a staff. There was, even in his childish face, a trace of the strength, the determination, the dauntless spirit of the man.

Sydney passed on with a sigh. Perhaps he thought of the weary years of sorrow and disappointment which had been in store for the child; perhaps he remembered the unfulfilled hopes of his youth.

They sat down by the great window at the far end of the apartment, and looked out into the dewy garden, with its fair lawns and well-kept walks.

‘You are satisfied with your life?’ asked Sydney, after a long pause. ‘You are happy?’

‘Quite satisfied,’ said Hugo, quickly. ‘Quite happy. It has been a wonderful year for me.’

Sydney seemed about to put some other question, but he checked himself. Was it not natural that he should be satisfied—as yet? Life had brought him many fair things during the last few months, and he

had not yet realised the hollowness of the world's friendship—he lived in a world of intrigue without being aware of it—he judged others by himself. The awakening must come ere long; but Sydney would not hasten it, he would only prepare his young follower, as far as in him lay, to face the coming storm.

And so a peaceful week passed by. They read together, talked together, walked together. Sydney was busy correcting a manuscript, written some years previously. He discussed this with Hugo, let him read it through, and help in searching for various references.

One morning the weather was so mild, that they took their books out into the park.

It was the first of May, and the golden sunshine made the grassy slopes of that lovely place look like a little paradise. The giant beech-trees were in all the glory of the early spring green, while the oaks gave a touch of sombre russet to the land-

scape, with here and there a rosy tinge where the buds were beginning to unfold themselves. All was very still; nothing was to be heard, save the splashing of the waterfowl in the lake, the singing of the birds, the soft movements of the deer browsing among the brake-fern, and now and then faint strains of very distant music, just sufficient to remind the two who were revelling in that peaceful quiet that somewhere the country-folk were dancing round the village maypole, and paying homage to some pretty May queen.

Hugo was stretched at full length on the velvety turf reading the last pages of the manuscript of those 'Discourses on Government' of which later on so much was to be heard.

Sydney was leaning back against the trunk of the tree known as Sir Philip Sydney's oak which grew not far from the lake, and he had in his hand a small volume of Plato. He had read but little, however, being much more inclined to

watch the face of the young man beside him and mark his progress through the manuscript. Hugo was fast approaching the end, and the writer wondered a little how the work on which he had spent so many years of thought, so much arduous labour would affect him. The thought came to him, as it must have come to many, that this work of his which had cost him much would, if read by the many at all, be read cursorily, would perchance be the interest of a day or the occupation of a few idle moments, and then would be tossed aside and forgotten. The writer stands in the same position to the creations of his brain as the parent to the child. He alone can quite understand them, because he alone has lived ever with them, and he alone knows all they have cost. He wondered how this work of his would strike Hugo Wharnccliffe, how far he would gather from his work what he had intended to be gathered. For, after all, words are but clumsy means of communicating thought,

and, moreover, most readers read themselves and their prejudices into every book they handle.

This quiet week at Penshurst had done much—far more than Sydney knew—towards developing within his guest the love of country, the love of freedom, above all, the love of justice, which had hitherto lain somewhat dormant in his heart. The rigid discipline of Dr. Busby, the tyranny of Randolph, combined with the reverential devotion which was ingrained in his nature, had not been favourable to the growth of these virtues. Nor would they ever have sprung into life in Hugo's heart had he not seen them embodied in a man whom instinctively he worshipped. He was not as yet capable of perceiving the true and beautiful in abstract; he saw them only, as perhaps most of us see them, when embodied in human beings, either immortalised in history or actually living. But under Sydney's guidance he was growing rapidly, and to a keen observer nothing is

more fascinating than to mark this sort of growth. In all the anxieties, in all the national griefs of that time, Sydney was able to interest himself keenly in the frequent contact with a young, fresh, vigorous mind feeling its way into greater things. Hugo's devotion was very sweet to him, moreover, for he was at that time strangely friendless, and everywhere regarded as one with whom it would be impolitic to cultivate a close acquaintance.

Perhaps he was thinking of this when he spoke next to Hugo. The young man had turned the last leaf of the manuscript, had read the last words of the notable 'Discourses,' and was in truth almost burdened by the feeling that beside him stood the writer, this man who had studied the theory of government more deeply than any man of that age.

'So you have ended your task,' said Sydney, with a smile. 'How now, are you not somewhat taken aback to find yourself the guest of one who writes what some

would account treason? Bethink yourself! Were it not better to withdraw from the acquaintance of such an one?’

‘Nay, sir,’ said Hugo, with a gesture of eager protest, ‘say not such words even in jest.’

‘’Tis true,’ said Sydney, ‘that so coldly prudent a thought would be slow to rise in your generous heart. But in truth, Hugo, I must warn you that there is verily some risk to you in being accounted my friend.’

‘If so, then I gladly take the risk,’ said Hugo, quickly. ‘And, should it indeed ever be that the giving is not wholly on your side, then I shall be right happy.’

The elder man looked sadly, and yet with much tenderness, at the eager face of the youth, who spoke so warmly, so promptly, words which would involve so much.

‘I see no cause for immediate anxiety,’ he said. ‘But the Whig party is now in grave peril. Monmouth’s cause not yet

ripe, and even the city won over by foul means to the interests of the Court. For the time I see naught that can be done save to keep quiet, and to prepare the people for the next election, that they may perceive their rights and their duties. Yet even now, while the nation groans under the yoke of the Stuarts, there is much servile adulation of the king. Heard you the song which was sung not long since at the Lord Mayor's banquet? A description of His Majesty, forsooth!

‘“In whom all the virtues are fitly combined,
Whom God as a pattern hath sent to mankind.”’

The words were such a grotesque mockery that Hugo could not restrain a laugh.

‘I bear no ill-will to His Majesty,’ he said, after a pause. ‘But yet this fawning servility doth disgust one.’

‘Ay,’ said Sydney. ‘And can you wonder, then, that before me is ever a vision of the time when the foul flattery, the arrogant pride of such courts shall be for ever done away? Not long since I had with me in

this very place the laws which my friend Penn framed in concert with myself for his new province, his fair Utopia over the seas. But i' faith it was oftentimes sad work to copy fair those laws for a foreign land, while my own land was in slavery.'

'Tell me, sir,' said Hugo, 'what were the chiefest improvements devised in those laws? How did they differ from our own?'

'Briefly I will sketch them to you,' said Sydney. 'They are to have two legislative chambers, both of them elected by universal suffrage. They are to have annual parliaments, and no property qualification for members. They are to have vote by ballot, perfect freedom in all religious matters, universal education, abolition of the death penalty for all crimes save murder and treason. Idleness is to be punished as a vice, prisons are to be used as houses of education and industry in the hope of raising the inmates, instead of as now hopelessly degrading them, and last, but not least, though your profession

may not bless us, fees of law are to be fixed at a low rate, and to be hung up in all courts of justice.'

'Twill verily be a Utopia!' exclaimed Hugo, amazed at the novelty and the daring character of the reforms, as indeed he might well be, seeing that Penn and Sydney were two hundred years at least in advance of their time, and propounded schemes which were none of them adopted in England till the nineteenth century, and for want of some of which the nation yet suffers.

'That will be the basis of the constitution, and the people themselves will have the power of advancing upon that basis. The power is in their hands. Utopia, you think!' he smiled a little. 'Well, perhaps—or we will say a free land, which is the same thing in other words.'

Hugo was silent for some minutes; the loveliness of the surroundings, the glad spring-time, the sweet sights and sweet sounds filled his heart with a strange

pain. Like the hectic beauty of one dying of consumption, fair Nature seemed but the outer veil of a hideous disease; for, alas! alas! in this land, this very land where the grass was so green, the landscape so fair, the people were daily falling more and more under the tyrannical power of a monarch who was great in nothing but double-dealing, and had not even the courage of his opinions, like the far less popular Duke of York. Faintly he began to perceive the evils of the present, and yet it was well-nigh impossible for one brought up as he had been altogether to agree with Sydney's views. He was not yet capable of grasping them in their entirety, while, as to entering into any sort of action which would be contrary to Randolph's liking, the thought was torture to him. Luckily there was as yet no question as to action; as yet it was possible to stand aloof and study each side.

Even as he mused, he was watching a figure which had just emerged from be-

hind the clump of trees between the oak and Lancup Well. It proved to be Ducasse bearing a letter, and the letter was for Hugo. Somehow, as he opened it, a cloud seemed to fall upon the day, and a chill foreboding filled his heart.

It was from Randolph, and consisted of a peremptory command to return to London that very day. He had need of him.

He handed the square sheet to Sydney without a word, but it was not difficult to see that the summons was most unwelcome. Moreover, he was now old enough to feel the injustice of sending him no word of explanation, of requiring him to forego what he so greatly prized, while giving no reason whatever.

‘You must in truth go?’ questioned Sydney.

‘Ay, sir, and without delay,’ he replied.

Sydney was silent for a minute. He in his young days had suffered much from the undue harshness of his father’s treatment, and he felt sorry for this youth, who

was far less capable than he had been of endurance. Plucking a leaf from the oak-tree to mark his place in his book, he turned to Hugo.

‘My son, it has long been in my mind to say one thing to you. We have learnt to know each other, and I have not had you thus closely with me these days without noting that in you which assures me that you will in many matters have to go through life more or less as a solitary. I, too, had to learn that lesson early in life. The time will assuredly come when you will find yourself differing from your brother,—prepare yourself for that time, that when it comes you may be strong to meet it.’

Hugo winced. The mere mention of a difference with Randolph was keenly painful to him.

‘Yes,’ said Sydney, marking his expression, ‘’tis not always those who give their lives for their country who serve her at greatest cost ; many things are more to be

apprehended than a hatchet. I mind me long years ago using those very words to my father when the sense of his displeasure and continued neglect weighed far more with me than the risk of secret assassination. You are in some ways more fit to stand alone than I was.'

'More fit, sir!' echoed Hugo, amazed.

'Ay, though you look surprised, 'tis nathless true,' said Sydney, with a smile. 'For the best part of your life has been lived with books rather than with men, like my friend Pallavicini, and therefore loneliness will press on you the less heavily. It was not till I was nigh upon forty that I learnt to have my conversation with birds, trees, and books, and to suffice unto myself.'

'Was that during your stay in Italy, sir?'

'Yes, during a summer I spent at Frascati. There I fell with some eagerness to reading, and found so much satisfaction in it, that though I every morning saw the

sun rise, yet I never went abroad till six or seven of the clock at night. Now this hermit life is by nature tasteful to you, and therefore you may perchance mind solitude and enforced inaction less than I have done.'

They walked slowly towards the house while talking, for Hugo was too promptly obedient to neglect even for an instant Randolph's peremptory command. He would not consent to wait even for the one o'clock dinner, but begged that his horse might at once be saddled. Nevertheless, there was some little delay, for which in his heart he blessed the grooms, and in the meantime Sydney paced to and fro with him in the avenue, which was called Saccharissa's Walk, in memory of Sydney's beautiful sister Dorothy, immortalised by Waller under that name. But Hugo bestowed no thought upon the daily walks which the 'matchless dame' had been in the habit of taking in that stately aisle; he could think only of the grave,

strong, thoughtful face beside him, grave even to sternness, and yet to him never lacking in tender kindness. Through the fresh green of the trees there flickered the golden May sunshine, and the birds sang with a joyous recklessness which was just now ill in accord with the heaviness of Hugo's heart. He could not have put his dread into words, but it was there, a deadly oppression, weighing down his heart like lead. He put into words the more definite fear which Sydney's speech by Lancup Well had suggested to him.

'Sir,' he said, 'I trust I am no coward, but yet I own that the thought of a difference with my brother doth trouble me. I fear that naught could make me insensible to it.'

'He that is not sensible of such things must be an angel or a beast,' said Sydney. 'And I can well deem that to you the prospect of any difference is a species of torture. For that very reason I spoke to you. What if it be torture? dread it

not! what if it cripple your life, as mine has been crippled? still, dread it not! Believe me, lad, there is naught in this world to be dreaded save sin and shame.'

Into Hugo's mind there flashed the recollection of that stealthy visit to Mondisfield Hall. Never once during the peaceful visit to Penshurst had his skeleton stalked forth from its cupboard, but now it made itself hatefully apparent, walking with him through that beautiful avenue, choking him with its deadly power.

'What can one do when duties seem to clash?' he said. 'Ah, sir, they must oft have done so in your life, perchance even now they may do so. Tell me—in such a case, what do you do?'

In his tone was all the suppressed eagerness, the subdued emotion of one who, in sore distress, turns to a stronger, older, wiser nature, with the instinct that in age and experience the true counsellors are to be found.

Sydney walked for a few paces in silence. When he replied, he looked not at Hugo, but far out beyond the trees, where shadows and flickering gleams of sunlight broadened into one wide expanse of uninterrupted brightness.

‘I walk in the light God hath given me,’ he said, with a grave simplicity. ‘If it be dim or uncertain I must bear the penalty of my errors.’

Before anything more had passed, a servant approached to tell him that the horse was ready. Ducasse had collected Hugo’s possessions and there was no excuse for further delay.

‘Take this little volume as a remembrance of your visit,’ said Sydney, placing in his hand the book he had been reading beneath the oak-tree; it was the ‘Republic’ of Plato.

Feeling like one in a dream, Hugo uttered thanks and farewells, grasped Sydney’s hand, then mounted his chestnut,

and gathering up the reins, started on his journey. What was this weight at his heart? Why did this awful foreboding overcome him? The oppression grew intolerable, and with a sudden impulse he turned back to the great doorway, where Sydney stood alone, the servants having returned to the house.

‘Has Ducasse forgotten, aught?’ questioned Sydney, as the young man dismounted.

‘Naught, sir,’ said Hugo, once again grasping his hand. ‘Pardon me, and think me not in very truth a coward, but there is over me a sense of coming trouble, and I cannot shake it from me.’

‘You are over finely strung for this hard world,’ said Sydney. ‘Nathless all the more for that very reason it behoves you to dread nothing. “Sanctus amor patriæ dat animum.” Forget not our motto. We shall meet again in London. Farewell, my son.’

And therewith the strong hand rested on his shoulder for a minute, and in silence—a silence which he dared not trust himself to break—he bade a last farewell to Algernon Sydney.

In the dreary numbness of feeling which fell upon him as once more he resumed his way, he raised himself in his stirrups and turned for a last glance at the place. One more look at that noble front, at those battlemented towers; one more look at the great doorway still visible between the beech-trees; one more look at the figure in the plain brown doublet and broad-brimmed Spanish beaver. Why did those last words, 'We shall meet again in London,' return to him so persistently, and with such a melancholy cadence? If they met again, then all would be well, and this hateful foreboding which chilled him through and through, would prove a device of the fiend's, designed to weaken and depress him. It should do nothing of the kind! And putting his horse into a hand-

gallop, he rode rapidly through the fair Kentish woods, driving out fears for the future with the words of Sydney's motto, 'Holy love of country gives courage.'

CHAPTER XI.

WILL'S COFFEE-HOUSE.

To mery London, my most kyndly nurse.

SPENSER.

THE sun was getting low when Hugo, having ridden as hard as the state of the roads would permit, reached London. Even the sight of his beloved Abbey could not cheer him, there was no denying that this sudden return was highly distasteful to him, and weary with his long ride, and the heat of the May-day, he made his way on with graveness bordering on dejection. On past Charing-Cross, and along the Strand, with its continuous row of houses and shops on the northern side, and its

noble mansions with gardens stretching to the river on the south ; on through the busy throng of people, the clatter of tongues, the ceaseless noise of street traffickers who filled the air with their shrill cries, 'Buy a dish of flounders,' mingling with the cry of 'Ballads, ballads, fyne new ballads ;' and 'Fyne oate cakes,' getting hopelessly mixed with 'Quick periwinkles ;' while ever from the busy chapmen at the shop doors there was a ceaseless refrain of 'What d'you lack ? What d'you lack ?'

Reaching at length the quiet of King's Bench Walk, he found no one within but old Jeremiah.

'Glad to see you, master, right glad,' said the old servant. 'And you look all the better for your stay in the country.'

'Ay, I am well enough,' said Hugo, somewhat wearily. 'What is the meaning of it all, Jerry ? Why doth my brother send for me ?'

'In truth, lad, I know not,' said Jerry,

brushing the traveller's dusty cloak while he spoke. 'He hath not been well the last two days, and maybe that is the reason he needs you.'

'Unwell! Randolph unwell,' exclaimed Hugo. 'Then I am right glad he sent for me. Did he leave no message for me where to find him?'

'Ay, lad, he said an you came before night you were to go to him at Will's, he would be there till eight of the clock.'

'Then I will go to him at once,' said Hugo, promptly. 'No,' as Jeremiah would fain have detained him, 'I can rest there as well as here. Lock up the place, Jerry, and take a turn yourself, these chambers feel stifling.'

He hurried away, and emerging from the quiet regions of the Temple, once more found himself in the realms of noise and confusion. Passing through Temple Bar, he made his way through the ranks of hackney coaches which stood for hire in the open space around the lofty maypole

in the Strand. This had stood there since the Restoration, but since a great gale in 1672 had been shorn of a third of its height. This evening it was gaily decorated, and a merry throng had gathered round it in spite of the grumbling of the hackney coachmen, who would not budge an inch from their lawful territory, and preferred all the pushing and jostling of the merry-makers to a cession of their rights. Turning into the comparative quiet of Drury Lane, Hugo made his way to Will's coffee-house, which was near Covent Garden, at the western corner of Bow Street. This coffee-house was the great emporium of libels and scandals, but it was one of the best notwithstanding, and had acquired the sobriquet of the 'Wits' Coffee-House.' Hugo often frequented it for the sake of hearing the talk of the poets, authors, and celebrities who were in the habit of meeting there. This evening as he made his way upstairs in the fading evening light to the chief room he found it crowded.

There was an air of ease and liberty about the place, while the faces of those who lounged at the tables were, as a rule, worth looking at. Some were supping, others smoking, others reading the *Observer*, Roger North's spiteful paper, or the Tory and Whig journals of the day. Julian, the drunken and disreputable fellow who was in the habit of distributing the latest lampoons, stood near the door with a sheaf of papers in his hand, many of which were already circulating in the room, and which consisted of some disgusting verses on the Duke of Monmouth. There was a buzz of general conversation, and at first Hugo could nowhere see his brother in the crowded room. Looking for him, however, he caught sight of Matthew Prior, rather to his surprise—for by rights he should have been at Cambridge—and the old schoolfellows shook hands with each other. Prior was a pleasant fellow enough, but already a little spoilt

by his high opinion of his own powers, and by the patronage of my Lord Dorset.

‘Art looking for old Dryden?’ he asked, irreverently. ‘He was here but a half-hour since. Some one happened to breathe a word of Rose Alley, however, and the old gentleman immediately found the room too hot for him.’

A few years before, the poet had been attacked by hired ruffians on his way to his house in Gerard Street, and shamefully beaten. The masked villains escaped, and were never discovered; but everyone was aware that the insult had been planned by Rochester, to gratify his private spite. The laureate never heard the last of it, however, and to his dying day his enemies cast the ‘disgrace’ in his teeth.

‘The Rose Alley ambushade disgraced the perpetrators more than the victim, to my mind,’ said Hugo, quickly. For although Sydney’s indignation with ‘The Duke of Guise’ had shaken his former

admiration of Dryden, yet he was of too generous a nature to tolerate such a reference to the shameful ill-treatment of one who was no longer young.

‘Have you seen my brother?’ he questioned.

‘Ay, there he is in the balcony, and Dryden too,’ said Prior.

Thither, accordingly, Hugo made his way. He found a group of men lounging about the balcony smoking and listening to the talk of an old man in a suit of purple cloth, who sat in the midst of them in the arm-chair which had long been consecrated to his sole use, and which this evening had been moved from the hearth to its summer quarters in the balcony. Apparently they had been speaking of his recent poem, ‘Religio Laici;’ and, as far as Hugo could make out, Randolph, who had not yet perceived him, was urging the poet to write a fresh play, and proving that the stage was the real place from which to teach the people.

‘Ay,’ said the poet, a smile on his wrinkled face. ‘Ay, Betterton, thou art the preacher of the golden age.’

He had turned to a pleasant-looking man of about eight-and-forty, who stood leaning against the window-frame close to Hugo. He was the great tragedian of the day, a man as much beloved for his personal amiability as for his great gifts.

‘Nay,’ he replied; ‘you are the teacher and preacher, I am but the mouthpiece. Nevertheless, Mr. Wharncliffe is right; the stage is the national pulpit.’

‘What would our divines say to such a bold statement?’ said Dryden. ‘They’ll be raking up the ancient statute, Betterton, and denying you Christian burial!’

‘Nay, that was but in France, an I remember right,’ said Betterton, laughing. ‘And it was but of late that Dr. Tillotson said to me these very words. Said he, “How comes it about that after I have made the most moving discourse I can, am touched deeply with it myself, and

“speak it as feelingly as I am able, yet I can never move people in the church near so much as you do on the stage?”

‘And what reply made you?’ asked Dryden.

‘I replied that it seemed to me easily to be accounted for, since he was only telling them a story, and I showed them facts.’

‘A good answer, and true, very true,’ said Dryden. ‘The stage is a great power! Ha! is not that my silver-voiced youth,’ catching sight of Hugo, and nodding pleasantly to him.

Randolph turned to greet him, and was not ill-pleased to see him being made much of by the great poet and the first actor of the day. Hugo took it all, as was his habit, very quietly, and there was a sort of graceful deference in his manner to the elder men which, being quite free from flattery or adulation, had a great charm.

Dryden was pressing him to sing, but the actor, with his ready observation and

knowledge of faces, at once perceived that he was hungry and tired.

‘Wait till he has supped,’ he said, ‘and presently let us ask him for the May-day song.’ Then, linking his arm within Hugo’s, he drew him back into the room. ‘Come, we will sup together,’ he said. ‘I too am hungry, and you, an I mistake not, are just off a journey.’

Supper ended, Hugo began to tune the lute which was brought to him by one of the attendants, and then, as Dryden again besought him for a song, he sang, ‘Come, lasses and lads,’ with so much spirit, and with such rare sweetness of tone, that the whole assembly applauded, and were inclined to grumble when Randolph, at a much earlier hour than usual, took his departure, signing to his brother to accompany him.

Perhaps, considering that all the world was inclined to treat Hugo almost caressingly in deference to his youth and his unassuming modesty, his great talents and

his beautiful face, it was as well for his character that he met with the very reverse of this treatment in his home life.

Randolph walked him home in dead silence—a silence which, though Hugo longed to know the reason of his sudden recall from Penshurst, he did not dare to break. But when they had reached the Temple his guardian's stern brow cleared, and as if returning from an anxious reverie he said abruptly,

‘I have somewhat to say to you, boy. Come with me; we will take a turn in the gardens.’

‘Jeremiah saith you have been unwell,’ said Hugo, venturing at last to speak.

‘’Tis true, and partly for that reason I sent for you. But chiefly I sent because I have a letter from Sir Peregrine Blake, and he, very courteously desiring that bygones may be bygones, bids us both to his house, for the coming of age of his eldest son.’

The brothers were pacing up and down

the Inner Temple garden, and Hugo was thankful that the place was almost dark, for he could not conceal his annoyance. That he should have been dragged from Penshurst to go down to the Suffolk magistrate's house seemed to him almost intolerable.

'Surely,' he began, 'surely the mere fact of our duel might excuse me from going; I have no wish to——'

Randolph interrupted him with a volley of oaths.

'Who asked if you had a wish? I know naught of wishes in the matter.' He paused, wondering whether to tell his plans or not.

'But—' began Hugo.

'Not another word!' said Randolph, peremptorily. 'Be ready to start with me at noon to-morrow, and let me hear no more of this nonsense.'

With that he hastily left him; but Hugo lingered in the dusky garden struggling with a miserable sense of coming ill which

beset him once again much as it had done when he left Penshurst. And the river flowed darkly on, and one by one the stars shone forth in the dim grey skies, and the night wind sprang up, carrying on its breath the scent of the early roses in the garden drenched with dew. But Hugo heeded nothing, only wrestled despairingly with this phantom of coming ill which nothing would banish from his mind. At length, worn out, he went back to the rooms in King's Bench Walk, but even in sleep the horrible oppression followed him, and he struggled all night in an imaginary net which, as fast as he broke its meshes, closed up afresh, and eternally baffled his efforts at escape. It was with a momentary sense of rapture that he was roused once again to the world of realities by the familiar bell and the deep voice of the watchman proclaiming, 'Past four o'clock, and a fine, windy morning.'

That hateful net was gone! he sprang up and looked forth. He was free and in

his own world, and there was the old watchman in the grey morning light, with his broad-brimmed hat and long coat girt in at the waist, the lantern shedding a sickly yellow gleam on the point of his halberd. There too were the familiar trees opposite, and the birds already beginning to quarrel and chatter, and in the distance he could hear the rumbling of market-carts in Fleet Street. Four o'clock—and at noon he was to start on this uncongenial journey. Ah, well! the net of his dreams had passed away, and yet he was environed by a strangely tangled web of circumstances.

CHAPTER XII.

A COSTLY MUMMING.

Oh, that a man might know
The end of this day's business ere it come !
But it sufficeth that the day will end,
And then the end is known.

Julius Cæsar.

THE fine windy morning heralded by the watchman, proved to be one of those glorious spring days, when city streets seem well-nigh intolerable, and everyone longs for the country. Hurrying to Norfolk Street early in the morning to bid farewell to the Denhams, Hugo met with nothing but expressions of envy, nor did anyone but Mary understand his reluctance to be the guest of Sir Peregrine Blake. Spite, how-

ever, of his reluctance, Hugo was too young and too impressionable not to feel ere long a certain pleasure in turning his back on the streets of London, and riding out into the open country, not indeed such exquisite country as he had had around him at Penshurst, but rich, level tracts, beautiful with spring flowers, and full of that sense of life and growth which is typical of a mild morning of early May. Larks singing overhead, sparrows chirping in every bush, lambs bleating in the fields, and huge black rooks swooping about hither and thither with deep caws, supplying the bass as it were to the rural symphony.

Randolph was in an excellent temper, and made no reference to his displeasure of the previous evening. On the contrary he had never treated his brother more as a friend and companion; they spoke of Penshurst and of Sydney, and, although Hugo said little or nothing of Sydney's political views, Randolph could perceive

that his purpose had been carried out, the youth evidently knew much that might prove of great value. This consciousness pleased him so well, that he felt more kindly disposed to his ward than he had done for some time, and by the time they had reached Bishop-Stortford in the cool of the evening, Hugo had quite forgotten the vague dread of the previous night, and was in the seventh heaven of happiness. Very strange was the subtle fascination which attracted him to that strong perverse nature. The mixture of harsh exactingness and real fondness on the part of the elder brother had bound Hugo's loyal heart to his with bonds that nothing could dissever.

Sleeping that night at Bishop-Stortford, they rode on to Longbridge Hall the following day, arriving just in time for the early dinner. Sir Peregrine had quite recovered from his wound, and treated Hugo with a sort of laughing deference,

perpetually referring to the duel in a way which put him to the blush.

Nothing, however, was said of the cause of the strife, fair Mistress Joyce, nor indeed did anyone refer to Mondisfield Hall. Once when young Peregrine Blake, the eldest son, had ridden over with Hugo and several of the guests to St. Edmondsbury, on a Wednesday, Hugo for a moment fancied that he saw Joyce among the gay throng; it was market-day, and every street was crowded with country folks. But the face only flashed upon him for a moment, and when he turned to look once more he could discern nothing but the back of a brown hood, and the broad linen collar, puffed sleeves, and straight skirts of a gown, which had in them nothing individual. He thought it was indeed Joyce, but he could not feel sure.

After that it must be confessed that she was for the time being driven from his thoughts by the perpetual round of gaiety

and amusement kept up at Longbridge Hall, in honour of the birthday of the son and heir. Long days of hawking and fishing, bowls, basset, dancing, and theatricals almost banished from his mind the sweet little Puritan maid. Spite of his forebodings, he greatly enjoyed the ten days' recreation, and the jovial atmosphere of the country-house in time of festival was new to him.

Randolph continued to treat him with all brotherliness, and allowed him to see that the general homage which he received from the Suffolk household on account of his fine voice and handsome face was pleasing to his fraternal pride. What wonder if he did not in all things rise above the circumstances in which he was placed ! what wonder that peril, following on the pleasure, found him unprepared !

One day, when their stay was supposed to be drawing to a close, the whole family were sitting at dinner in the great hall, when, after the meat had been removed,

and the chaplain had, in accordance with custom, quitted the table, Hugo was startled by receiving from his brother a signal to rise too. He had always felt sorry for the meek little clergyman, who retired from the table when the pastry and sweetmeats were served, only returning at the end to say grace for the family. It had always reminded him of a negro proverb which he had once heard from the lips of one of the Duchess of Cleveland's black servants, — 'Them what eats kin say grace.' It had amused him infinitely to see day by day the poor little chaplain decorously giving thanks for what he had *not* received. But what could this signal mean? and what was Randolph saying to Lady Blake?—something about the wager he had mentioned to her, mingled with compliments and apologies.

'And good luck to you!' said Sir Peregrine, who already was far from sober— 'good luck to you! We will drink to your success.'

Success ! Good luck ! A wager ! What in the world did it all mean ? Bewildered, Hugo followed his brother out of the hall, and upstairs to their chamber, Randolph at present vouchsafing no explanation whatever. Upon the bed lay two suits of fantastic-looking clothes, much the worse for wear, and reminding Hugo of the suits worn by the strolling musicians who had played a night or two since at the ball.

‘Lose no time,’ said Randolph, concisely. ‘Put on those,’—he motioned to the clothes.

Hugo obeyed like one in a dream. He knew by Randolph’s tone that a question would but call forth just such a volley of oaths as his question in the Temple Gardens had done. He dressed obediently, though not without some uneasy wonder as to the real purpose of this extraordinary disguise. Dressing up and all manner of theatricals had, however, been so much the order of the day of late that there was something familiar about it after all, and

he could not help a little amusement when, on looking round, he discovered his grave elder brother transformed into a very foreign-looking fellow, and so altered by the change of wig and dress that he looked a typical strolling musician. Apparently Randolph was not quite so well pleased with his survey of his ward, for he motioned him to a chair and drew forth his large tortoise-shell comb.

‘Your hair will never do like that,’ he said. ‘Now listen to me for a while, and bestow on what I say your careful attention, for it is of no slight importance.’

Hugo, however, instead of listening, gave a sudden exclamation of surprise and dismay, for, as Randolph spoke in quiet, measured tones, he felt some instrument close to his neck, the edge of which was thinner and colder than the comb, and the next moment at one fell swoop his long glossy mane was severed from his head.

‘Good heavens ! brother,’ he exclaimed,

'this passeth a joke. Methinks our mumming is like to prove costly.'

In his tone there was some natural indignation, and Randolph, autocratic as he was, thought it well to make all due apologies.

'Vex not yourself,' he said. 'I would not have done such a thing an it had not been necessary. And see here, I give you on the instant the full money's worth of those locks of which you have been shorn. Take these fifty guineas, and Rupert Denham shall take you to the crack wig-maker in London the instant we return.'

Hugo passively allowed the gold to be placed in his hand, but he was evidently much more annoyed than he had ever appeared to be before, and the elder brother somehow perceived that the days of his absolute tyranny over his ward were likely to draw rapidly to an end.

'You deserve some explanation of this summary act,' he began, diplomatically. 'And yet, Hugo, I must ask you in the

main to trust me. This much, however, I may tell you. I have accepted an enormous wager successfully to carry out a day's work in the disguise of a strolling musician. Without you I cannot do it; and, believe me, you shall not be the loser, if I can manage all that I wish.'

'But——' began Hugo, doubtfully.

'No buts,' said Randolph, peremptorily. 'The buts are for me to think of, not for you to suggest.'

'I hate your plans and your mysteries!' broke in Hugo, passionately, as all the vague dread and the dim suspicion returned to him again with double force.

'Hate them, or like them, 'tis all one to me,' said Randolph, coldly. 'I have need of your services, and I command them. No more of this; we lose time. Follow me; and not another word!'

Chafing under an intolerable sense of injustice, and a consciousness that the toils were closing upon him which he was powerless to break, Hugo followed his

brother down a back staircase, typical enough to his mind of the whole proceeding. All had apparently been well arranged. They left Longbridge Hall without encountering a soul, and close to the entrance-gate found their horses waiting for them, ready saddled, and tied to a tree. In dead silence they mounted and rode away, a curious looking pair—Randolph apparently in high spirits, Hugo vaguely miserable. With his short, curly hair, his suit of travel-stained, blue cloth, decked here and there with faded ribbons, and a pair of down-trodden boots, of which he was keenly ashamed, it was impossible to conceive anything more unlike the young gentleman of the period. His very reluctance, and his air of uneasiness, made the disguise yet more effectual, and he looked so precisely the home-sick German whom Randolph desired him to portray, that the elder brother could scarcely suppress a chuckle of amused satisfaction whenever he glanced at him.

‘You shall not be forced to tell lies in my behoof,’ he said at length, with a touch of merriment in his voice which grated on Hugo. ‘A veritable musician from St. Edmondsbury will meet us anon, and you and I will turn then into two German minstrels, and borrow the “ja” and “nein” of our forbears.’

Hugo thought of his ancestor, the brave Count Hugo, and involuntarily he shuddered.

‘Come,’ said Randolph, ‘take it not so soberly. Most lads would enter into the fun with some show of spirit. Denham would enjoy the mumming, and be the life of our party. Don’t be a fool, Hugo! Trust me, this shall all turn to your advantage.’

Perhaps the tone of this last speech did to some extent allay Hugo’s fears. He brightened up a little, and began to practise fragments of German talk, and to consider what German songs he could sing. A few years before they had visited their

German kinsfolk, who still lived in Count Hugo's old castle, and both he and his brother knew the language well.

Before long they came in sight of a small wayside inn, and here Randolph reined in his steed, and dismounted, bidding Hugo follow his example. An ostler appearing, Randolph gave orders that the horses should be put up, and Hugo, wondering much what was about to happen, entered the inn reluctantly enough. Two men came to meet them in the flagged passage, the landlord, who proved to be one of Sir Peregrine Blake's old retainers, and the musician from St. Edmondsbury, a round-faced, jovial-looking man, by name Peter Pierson, wearing a dress almost exactly similar to that donned by the two brothers. Randolph had told him about the great wager for which he was undertaking this masquerade, and the little man quite entered into the spirit of the thing, and had of course sworn the strictest secrecy. He had brought with him his

fiddle, and a viol da gamba for Randolph. Hugo had, at Randolph's request, brought his own lute. Having slung their instruments across their shoulders, and tasted the landlord's home-brewed ale, they set off on their expedition, forsaking the high-road, and following Peter Pierson across country.

Whither? That was the question which filled Hugo's mind. A terror had taken possession of him that Mondisfield might in some way be connected with this strange undertaking. And yet how should strolling musicians have aught to do with that sober Puritan household? It was scarcely possible, and yet the haunting dread would recur to him, and he found himself continually remembering that hurried walk to the Hall on the night of the 5th of October. In vain he tried, however, to distinguish any feature of the landscape which would prove to him that they were in the same neighbourhood. It was just the same slightly undulating country that stretched

on and on for miles throughout Suffolk, nor could he anywhere see the grey tower of Mondisfield Church, or the four cross roads, or the brook. He plodded on heavily in his uncomfortable boots, following his brother and Peter, and ever with a growing distaste to the work which lay before him. At length Randolph turned back to him.

‘Carry this viol for me,’ he said; ‘’tis mighty heavy.’

Hugo quietly accepted the additional burden, but impatience and vexation as to the expedition itself unloosed his tongue.

‘Where are we going?’ he said, shortly, and in a tone which demanded an answer.

‘Only to a house whither honest Peter is in the habit of going every year,’ said Randolph, cheerfully. ‘Another coming-of-age party, and a feast for the tenantry. Odds-fish! boy, keep up your heart, ’tis no great thing I have asked of you.’

‘What if our disguise be discovered?’ asked Hugo.

‘An impossibility,’ replied Randolph. ‘And i’ faith there is no disgrace in a little masquerade. Why, it was but lately that the Duchess of Cleveland herself tired as an orange woman and came down to the Temple. And you yourself know that the Queen even dressed up as a peasant woman and went to a fair.’

‘Yes, and was speedily discovered,’ said Hugo.

Randolph’s tone suddenly changed.

‘If you lead to our discovery, I’ll thrash you within an inch of your life!’ he said, through his teeth. Then recovering himself he added, ‘But all will go well. Do merely as I tell you; speak only in German, and discovery is impossible.’

With that he left him and rejoined Peter, while Hugo, relieved of his fears about Mondisfield, followed wearily across fields and through woods, until they emerged into a park where deer were grazing under the oak-trees. Ah! there at last was the house; an avenue of oaks in

front, a moat with a slight wooden bridge crossing it, a long, rambling, irregular Suffolk hall, and surely not Mondisfield. For had not Mondisfield an avenue of elm-trees in front of it? And was not the moat much further from the house, and spanned by an ancient drawbridge leading to the bowling-green?

Hugo gave a sigh of relief as he followed the others across the bridge and up the well-kept garden path to the door where Peter knocked loudly, and Randolph resumed his viol.

A maid opened to them.

‘Ah, the musicians from St. Edmonds-bury!’ she exclaimed, looking well pleased. ‘Glad to see you again, Master Peter; here’s a fine doings to-day with us.’

‘Ay, ay,’ said Peter, entering and signing to the other two to follow him. ‘In our old quarters, my lass?’

‘Ay,’ she said, looking curiously at Hugo, ‘ay, up in the gallery, master. Why, you’ve brought some new comrades.’

‘Yes,’ said Peter, with a laugh; ‘foreigners fresh from Germany, and I’ll warrant you they’ll play you some merry tunes anon.’

‘Lord!’ exclaimed the girl. ‘Did they come from foreign parts? Take some ale, master, before you go up,’ she said, turning to Hugo, evidently much struck with his boyish good looks.

He crimsoned, and uttered two or three words in German which entranced her.

‘Lord, how strange he do talk!’ she cried, laughing.

‘He saith he cannot speak your tongue, mistress,’ said Peter, with a grin. ‘No, never mind the ale; we are late, and will go up straight and give them a tune.’

The maid opened a door, which Hugo thought belonged to a cupboard, but it proved to be the entrance to a very narrow, steep staircase, at the top of which was a small room, and beyond this again the old minstrel’s gallery.

Had he not been so desperately uncom-

fortable and ashamed of this masquerade, Hugo would have been pleased by the picturesqueness of the scene which greeted him when, following his elders, he emerged from the little room into the broad gallery, with its polished floor and massive wooden bannisters. Down below in the big hall were ranged long tables, laden with good cheer, and the tenantry were doing ample justice to the annual feast, and looked charmingly comfortable and happy. As it was, however, he shrank as far as possible into the background, and hardly looked at anything, bestowing all his attention on the tuning of his lute. Then Peter handed round the well-worn sheets of paper containing the various parts, and Hugo found that his music was so badly copied that it required all his attention. It was not until a song was demanded that he really looked down at the audience. But when, at a signal from Randolph, he stood up to sing a German *Volkslied*, he could not avoid seeing his

audience. As he sang, his eyes wandered from one to another in the crowd below; he had never sung before to such a rustic assembly, and the open-mouthed astonishment, and the grins of delight at the novel German song, could not fail to amuse him. It was not till the last verse that he looked quite to the further end of the long hall, where, in the doorway leading to some other room, there stood a group of girls, listening. These no doubt were the daughters of the house, and instinctively his eyes travelled rapidly from one to another, till with a shock, that for the time being almost paralysed him, they rested on Joyce Wharncliffe.

There she stood, hand in hand with Evelyn, her little figure drawn up to its full height—for was not this the festival day of the whole year, and did not the new blue gown demand a stately deportment? Her short waves of sunny brown hair, her wide-opened blue eyes, her piquant little mouth, looked just as they had looked

on that autumn Sunday when Hugo had last parted with her. Good heavens! for what purpose had Randolph brought him to this house,—this house, which, after all, must be Mondisfield, approached, perhaps, from the back instead of the front! A deadly faintness stole over him, an oppression from which no effort could free him; his voice wavered, his lips refused to form the words of the song, wreaths of white mist seemed to float suddenly across the hall, and he broke down.

Presently, above the confused babel of voices in the hall below, above Peter's fiddling, above Randolph's muttered remonstrances, Hugo became aware of steps ascending the little staircase. Peter stopped his tune and turned round to greet an elderly nurse who stepped into the gallery bearing a tankard of hot spiced ale, and followed rather shyly by Joyce and Evelyn.

'So, Master Peter,' she began, 'has he fainted, your young foreigner? My mistress bade me carry him this ale. Poor

lad, you've over-tired him with the long walk.'

Hugo accepted the tankard, glad of anything in which he could for a moment hide his face, and conceal the agony of shame, and fear, and perplexity which swept over him.

If only those blue eyes would not look at him with such compassion, he could have borne it better.

'How tired he looks!' said Joyce. 'And oh, see, Evelyn, how fine a lute he has! no wonder it sounded so sweetly. Shall I ask him to let us look at it?'

She drew nearer.

'I hope you are better,' she said, kindly, speaking quite as courteously to him in his character of poor musician as she had done six months before, when in very different attire he had lain back on the grass while she bandaged his wound.

He made the briefest of replies in German, and she turned to Peter.

'Does he only speak his own tongue?'

she said. 'Ah, then, good master Peter, make him understand, please, how sorry all the people are, and that we hope he will rest and perchance be able to sing to us later on.'

'He can but speak his own tongue, lady,' said Peter, pulling his forelock, 'but he can understand what is said to him. How now, Karl; look up, my man, the young lady would fain hear you sing again. Thou'lt soon be fit, eh?'

An insane longing to throw aside all disguise, to proclaim himself Joyce's kinsman nearly overmastered Hugo, and Randolph read his thoughts. He turned to him with a look so fierce that Joyce involuntarily stepped back a pace, and with angry gestures and a torrent of German, of which she could not understand a word, he thrust the lute back into his brother's hand and bade him at once resume his duties.

'He shall sing anon,' he said, with a

very foreign accent, turning to Joyce. But the smile on his face contrasted so unpleasantly with the look she had just before seen on it that she shrank away from him, and was not sorry to quit the gallery altogether, so violent was the antipathy which she all at once conceived for him.

The thought of the tired lutist a little interfered with her pleasure, and even when the country-dances began and delightful music, delightful motion, delightful excitement and novelty kept her radiantly happy, she would every now and then give a glance towards the gallery, and wonder how poor, tired Karl and his cross father were feeling. It was a puzzling world where some must fiddle for others to dance to, however weary or ill.

After a time, when there was a pause in the dancing, came some more songs, and Joyce, standing by her father, watched the singer intently. He sang well, yet

not as he had sung at first ; there was now an amount of effort in his singing which to Joyce quite spoilt the pleasure of hearing him. He sang coldly, resolutely, as if he had made up his mind to go through with it, however much it cost ; and he stood rigidly still, seeming to notice nothing.

‘He has a fine face,’ said Colonel Wharncliffe. ‘How strange it seems to see once more the fashions of my youth ! Short hair is to my mind more manly than these long locks and portentous wigs. The German youth sets us a good example.’

After that came more dancing, and the musicians in the gallery were kept hard at work until the time came for the finale of the evening, the speech by Colonel Wharncliffe, and the drinking of healths. The evening had now closed in, the red curtains had been drawn across the two huge windows, lamps and candles had been lighted in the old hall, and the tenants stood in

groups listening to the few words which the colonel never failed to say to them each year.

But for once in her life Joyce did not listen. For looking up to the gallery where candles were also burning, she could plainly see the German lutist through the wooden bannisters, and there was something in his face which diverted her attention from her father's speech. She had a strong impression that she had seen him before, and kept puzzling her brain to remember where it could have been. He sat now a little apart from his companions, rigidly still, and with a sort of blank hopelessness in his face which startled her. He never moved, he never even looked to the right or to the left. What story belonged to that face, she wondered? Perhaps he was thinking of his own country and wishing himself there; perhaps he was planning an escape from that cross father. And even in all the bustle and confusion of departure, when the tenants were putting

on their hats and cloaks, Joyce still was able to observe the last of the two Germans. Honest old Peter had hastened away to see if supper was being brought for them, and the elder man stood with one hand on his viol and the other on the lutist's shoulder, as though he held him against his will that he might the better talk with him. The light shone full on the face of the younger, and even at that distance Joyce could see how miserable he looked. It was the misery of one who struggles, but, lacking confidence, struggles without hope.

'To bed, my little Joyce, to bed,' said her father, 'or you will be over-weary.'

And Joyce was fain to obey, though she longed to know how that talk between the musicians would end. Turning for a last look at them as she quitted the hall, she saw that they still kept the same position, but, rather to her dismay, she found that the younger one was aware she had been watching them, for his eyes rested

upon her now, and the sadness and despair in them seemed to strike to her very heart. She ran swiftly upstairs, half blinded by tears, which, though she could not have explained them, somehow made her feel ashamed.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



